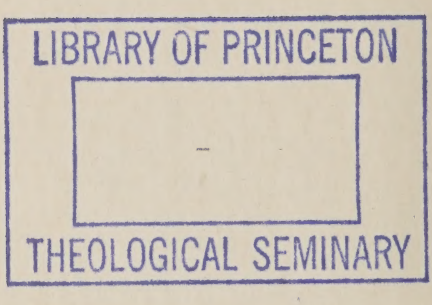
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THE NEW LIFE

THE NEW LIFE

Theodore Parker Ferris

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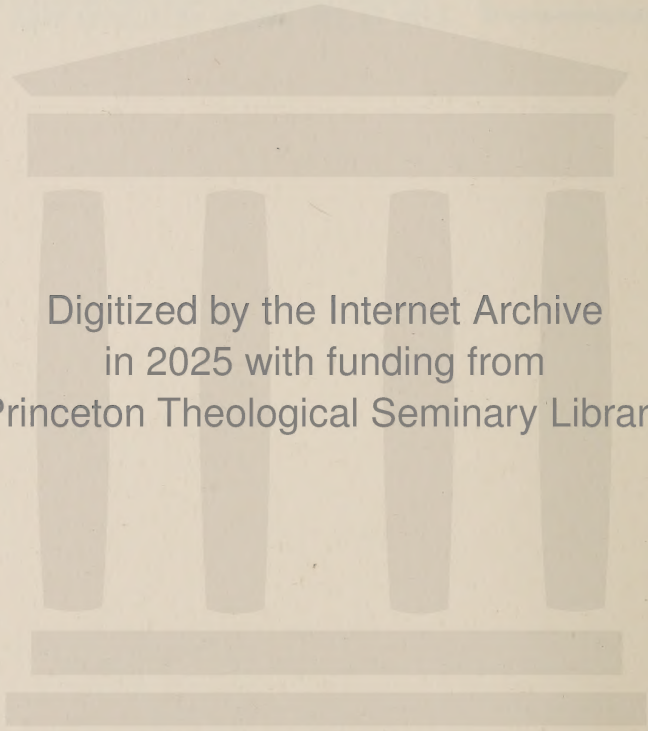
THIS BOOK is dedicated to the Wardens and Vestrymen of Trinity Church, Boston—past and present—who have done so much to bring the New Life to the people of a great city.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PREFACE

The content of this book was originally prepared to be spoken, and I have made no attempt to disguise the fact that it was meant to be heard, not read. I count on you to listen as you read, as though you were being spoken to, or better still, as though you were taking part in a conversation.

There was no prearranged continuity in the material, though I found myself drawn over and over again to some aspect of the New Life in Christ, and the material seemed to fall quite naturally into three parts. In the first part the theme is announced. In the second it is developed in terms of the New Life incarnate in Christ—in his teaching, but primarily in himself. In the third part the development takes the theme one step further and tries to show how the New Life applies itself in practice to contemporary events and conditions.

In speaking of the Christian Faith and Life one is bound to speak about it in reference to specific situations and events. Many of the contemporary events referred to in this book will have receded into obscurity, perhaps oblivion, before the book reaches you. The most that I can hope for is that the encounter of the Eternal with the timely actually took place, at least in some small measure,

when the words were first spoken, and that a few fragments of truth and life will remain over and above that which time has consumed.

THEODORE PARKER FERRIS

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PART I

The New Life

Beyond the Pursuit of Happiness

When St. Paul came to the end of his long letter to the community of Christians living in Rome, he became warmly personal. You remember how long that letter is, and how serious and profound an exposition of the Christian Gospel it is. But when he came to the end of it, his tone changed and he had some very personal things to say. One of the things was that he had wanted to meet the Christians in Rome face to face ever since he heard about their remarkable witness to the Christian faith under such difficult circumstances, and that now that his work in Greece and Asia Minor was coming to an end, he looked forward to the time when he could see them. He promised to visit them in the near future, and this is how he put it: *I hope to visit you on my way to Spain.* (Romans 15:22, J. B. Phillips)

Now for us, accustomed to travel by plane or even by a modern train or ship, Spain is only a step from Rome, but for St. Paul Spain was about as far as he could go. It was one of the outposts of civilization. There was only one step farther, and that was Britain. Paul, as you know, never got to Spain, but he did get to Rome, and every time I read this line in his letter I ask myself the question, Would Paul have gotten to Rome if he hadn't been aiming at Spain? Obviously, this is not a question which calls for a literal answer. Geographically and literally, we cannot say that his intention to go to Spain made it possible for him to get

to Rome, but there is this profound suggestion in Paul's promise: in order to get anything worthwhile in life, you must aim beyond it. More specifically, you never get happiness by pursuing it; you get it only when you pursue something beyond it.

Before we develop that idea I want to ground it even more thoroughly in the New Testament, for this passage from Paul which I have used as an introduction is only an imaginative and symbolic interpretation of a line in the narrative of Paul's letter.

Jesus, as you know, was born and raised in a family just as you were. Reading between the lines of the New Testament, you get the impression—that is, if you read imaginatively at all—that in his family there were the same tensions that there are in the families you know. You also get the impression from the very beginning that while, when he became of age, he left his family in order to do his work in the world, he was bound at least to his mother by unbreakable ties right up to the end. You also know that one of the Ten Commandments on which he based his life was, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and when he found the religious legalists of his day trying to get around that Commandment and avoid their responsibility to their parents by saying that the money they should give them was earmarked for the Lord, he was scathing in his condemnation of them. When he wanted to make people feel how much God loved them, he told them that he loved them the way a father loves his son.

So you can see how he felt about a family. Yet in Matthew's Gospel he is reported to have said this: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:37) What a staggering claim! We have read it and heard it so many times that it often runs like water off a duck's back.

We know that he was not saying this in any way to

slight the relationships that exist in a family at its best. Though we venture to make this interpretation of his meaning only with the greatest humility, it seems clear that what he was saying was that the relationship between a parent and child, precious though it be, cannot be the ultimate loyalty of a man's life. What he was trying to say was that there is something even greater than these great ties that bind us together in families, and that if you do not aim at the greater thing, you not only miss the greater thing, but you lose eventually the lesser thing. This led him to make the affirmation that he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it, but he that saveth, keepeth his life, shall lose it.

We can say this much, therefore, in the very beginning. If your family becomes the end of your existence, you will not only miss the greater thing, you will lose the lesser also. You never get family happiness, in other words, by pursuing it. You get it only when you pursue something far beyond it. This, then, is our theme, *Beyond the pursuit of happiness*. It is an old theme, as old as the hills; but of course, when you get right down to it, all the great themes in literature, as well as in religion and life itself, are old, and they become new only when they are applied to new and unprecedented situations. See first, then, how this old theme applies to the life of an individual in the current scene of American life.

I ask you to participate with me in a mental exercise. Think of the three greatest people you have ever known; not necessarily famous people, although they may be; but great people in the sense that they were built according to large-scale dimensions; great not so much in the sense that they were successful in business or in a career, but great in their capacity for life, both to take it in and to give it out. I have made my list; it includes one man and two women. They have all now entered into the Land of Light.

As I concentrated upon these three people, I could see

very clearly a few unmistakable characteristics which they all had, and I am asking you whether you find the same characteristics in the people you are thinking about. First, I could see that they all were *fulfilled* people. In a very real sense, they all had their heart's desire. I am sure that if I had asked them during their lifetime about specific desires in their lives, they would have told me that over and over again they had been disappointed and heartbroken, just as you and I have been. But I know that when I look at them now as they stand in Eternity, I see three wonderfully fulfilled human beings. There is not the slightest look of starvation or strain on their faces. Nor is there any sign of smugness or self-satisfaction, but there is every evidence of fulfillment and joy.

Another thing I could see immediately was that they never lived primarily for the gratification of their own desires, never. They had desires, both sensual and spiritual. Mark that. They were not immune to those desires which we sometimes put in the lower category, although I wonder whether they can be so completely relegated to the nether regions. Their desires were often gratified, but they did not live in order to gratify them. They did not pursue their day-to-day existence for the purpose of gratifying their own desires; they lived for something infinitely beyond that.

They were all Christians, and this is the third thing I could see that they had in common. They were all Christians, devoted members of the Christian Church, yet I think none of them would have *said* that he or she was living completely for God or Christ, simply because they were too modest to say it. But I say it as I look at them now.

The man, if you had asked him, I think would have said, "I live for the Old Testament," for he spent his life poring over the documents of that great Book, fascinated by every nuance of meaning, and revealing that meaning to students who came from far and wide. But, of course, he lived for

something infinitely beyond that. He was not merely the student of an ancient text; he was searching in that text for the reality of God, the ultimate mystery of Life which breaks into existence every now and then, in those early times in fierce and terrible ways, like storms and volcanoes, and finally in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what he was living for.

One of the women was unmarried and if anyone asked me now, as I look back upon her life, what she was living for, I should say that she lived primarily to lift the lives of those who were pressed down. She did this in every conceivable way, for all sorts of people; for men and women, young and old, interesting and uninteresting; through the channels of organizations and institutions, as well as in her personal, intimate relationships with people.

When I think of the third person, it is harder for me to put into words what she lived for, but I would say that in the best sense of the words she lived for the joy of existence. Everything around her, and everybody, was a source of delight and interest. But of course, when you knew her, you knew that that joy was something infinitely more than pleasure, and that there were all sorts of struggles going on within her very sensitive conscience, but that she lived each day with a kind of natural and instinctive faith that it would be a good day, and that she would be able to handle whatever it might bring forth.

Is it not true—of course, it depends upon the people you have chosen as the object of your admiration how you answer this question—but is it not true that the great people you have known have never lived for the pursuit of happiness, but for something beyond it?

Look at the people around you, not critically, not in a mood of judgment, but look at them charitably, sympathetically. What do you see? In addition to these fulfilled people that I have mentioned and that you all know—all of us could easily add many to their number—what kind

of people do you see? I see, and I say this with infinite humility and understanding, I see, especially among young people, people living under the illusion that if they gratify their personal and immediate desires they are on the way to life.

For instance, a young man says, if he tells the truth, "I want above everything else to make money, and I want to make a lot of it. I want to do it because I want power, and the prestige and security that money brings." If he happens to go into the entertainment field, he is willing to produce any kind of entertainment, high or low, vulgar or noble, if it makes money. If he enters the publishing business, he is willing to publish or print anything, good or bad, if it promises to be a best seller and make him a fortune. We could go on and on, but I need not. You know what I mean without saying anything more. The truth is that when a person lives for money and for money only, he is likely to make the money, if he is smart. The trouble is that the security which the money brings him usually turns out to be a deep-seated anxiety lest he lose the thing that he has so carefully gained.

Another person starting out in life says something like this: "I don't care about making a lot of money. I don't want to be famous, I don't want to be in *Who's Who,* necessarily. I just want to get on in the world and live a comfortable, private life. I don't want to be unnecessarily disturbed about great issues or great causes. I am not asking anything from other people, and I don't expect to give much over and above what I have to give in order to make myself a comfortable, pleasant, easy existence." Of course, as you hear me say this you feel the shallowness of it and, if you yourself happen to be in that frame of mind, you know perfectly well that if your primary object in life is just to get on, you are more than likely to go down. Perpetual floaters usually sink.

Many young people are saying something like this: "All

I want is to be free. I want to be free from the ancient taboos and from the restraints that society has gathered together and in the Puritan tradition has brought to a climax and put upon me as my inheritance. I want to be free."

We are living through a period of liberation, and hundreds of people have solemnly declared their independence of the old standards. They are going about their way doing what they want to do, when they want to do it, regardless. My question is, Are they free? Do they look free to you? It seems to me—of course, I could be wrong in my reading of the situation for I see at best only a limited number of people—but remembering the people I do see, it seems to me that this most completely liberated generation in the history of America is also the most completely frustrated generation. The trouble is, you see, that they are aiming at Rome, not Spain, with the consequence that they don't even get to Rome. They stay aloof from every great cause in order to preserve their independent and personal happiness. They may be happy; some of them surely are; but they don't often look happy.

Before we leave this, can you take a look at yourself? Do you dare? Let me ask one or two questions that may help you look at yourself more objectively than perhaps you ordinarily do. They are questions that I ask myself over and over again, realizing, of course, that many times the answer is not good.

Is there anything good for which you would gladly risk the most precious thing in your life? Or, to put it in Dean Inge's words, which I remember reading for the first time when I was in the Seminary, and I can remember still their sting, "Is there anything which you would rather die than do?" Is your family your ultimate goal—one of the best goals that anyone could have—but is it your ultimate goal? Or is your ultimate goal the family of God, into which you are trying to bring the other members of your family along with yourself, and for which sometimes

you are willing to make great personal sacrifices that are hard and difficult to make?

Is your personal comfort and happiness your real aim in life? I am sure you will say No before you stop to think about it, but don't be too sure. Or, is there something greater for which you would be willing to sacrifice your comfort and happiness? In other words, are you aiming at Spain or at Rome?

One solemn word before we move on. The reason that the answer to these questions is so important is not only that you are important. You *are* important and everything and anything that happens to you is of infinite importance, but that isn't the only reason. The reason that the answer is so important is that you and people like you make up the nation. *The alarming thing about America at the present moment is that it has no great purpose beyond the pursuit of happiness.* In fact, it may not have even that, for the pursuit of happiness, when it becomes the primary purpose of a nation's existence, gradually deteriorates into the pursuit of survival, and there are indications on all sides that the drift in our country today is in that direction. I know and thank God that there are hundreds of people who are not caught in this drift; I know and thank God that we have leaders who are far above and beyond it. I am talking about the climate that prevails throughout the land.

I cannot help but feel that as we give billions of dollars to help underprivileged nations, we give it not so much for the good it may do them, as for the good it may ultimately do us. I cannot but feel that even science, the most objective of all our disciplines, which exists only for the truth, is being pursued more and more as a means of survival. I read an article on religion in America by an intelligent Englishman who suggested that there was very good reason to believe that the revival, the extraordinary revival of church attendance and religious interest in the

United States, was largely to be explained as an effort of the people to defend themselves against Communism, that religion itself was being pursued as a means of survival. I hope not, but alas, I fear it may be so.

This chapter has made only one point and it is essentially a negative one. This is the point: If you are pursuing nothing beyond happiness, you will be miserable all your days. If the United States is pursuing nothing beyond survival, even that survival is dubious. If I could arouse one person to see that, to feel it deeply, this book would not be completely a failure. I realize, of course, that it leaves us with a vast question. What is there beyond happiness that we as a nation and as individuals can pursue? I hope to pursue that question in the next chapter and, indeed, throughout the rest of the book.

In the meantime, remember how Paul at the end of his letter, after he had touched the heights and depths of the Christian mystery, said to those people whom he loved but had never seen, "I hope to visit you on my way to Spain."

Come down, O God, into our world; open our minds to the truth; open our hearts to all things that are good and true and beautiful; and set our feet on the highway that leads toward the fulfillment, and not the frustration, of life, Amen.

The New Life

An American novelist by the name of Harvey Swados, in a serious article in a thoroughly secular magazine, *Esquire*, asks of the present college generation this question: "After your pleasures, what?" After your creature comforts have been satisfied, and after your desires of one kind or another have been gratified, what then? The implication of the article is that in the author's judgment a great many of the present college generation have not only not answered the question, they have not even asked it, and the chances are that their elders have obligingly followed their example.

The question that Mr. Swados so seriously raises is essentially the same question to which we were driven in the last chapter. We put the question this way: What is there beyond happiness that we as a nation, and as individuals, can pursue? We felt the terrible urgency of the question because we knew from experience, when we stopped to think of it, that unless we pursue something beyond our own personal happiness, not only will happiness itself slip through our fingers, but we will miss in the highest sense of the word the fulfillment of ourselves as human beings. As human beings—and this is a very solemn thing to remind ourselves—we have a capacity for something far greater than personal happiness, and that capacity is the command under which we live or die.

That was the gist of the last chapter. The question now is, What or whom, beyond happiness, shall we pursue,

can we pursue, ought we to pursue? How a person answers that question, of course, depends primarily upon his own basic convictions, but partly on the position he is in and from which he speaks, and partly on who the people are to whom he speaks. The secular novelist, whom I mentioned a moment ago, quite naturally gives a secular answer to the question. His answer is: Live well by living for others. It is a good answer, and his specific recommendations are worth your serious consideration.[1]

A statesman, on the other hand, speaking to the nation, the President or the Secretary of State, or someone else in high position, knowing that the nation is composed not only of Christians, but also of sincere Jews and of people belonging to other religious groups, as well as many people with no religious convictions whatever, would also be most likely to answer the question in secular terms, perhaps in words something like these: The greatest thing to pursue is the welfare of all the people; and the breadth and range of his vision would determine the content of the word "welfare." Or, if the person happened to be the writer of the Rockefeller paper on education, he might answer the question in terms of the Pursuit of Excellence which, as a matter of fact, is the title of John Gardner's book in which he makes a fine case for quality in education in spite of, indeed because of, the vast numbers we are attempting to educate.

I, however, am a Christian and my answer, therefore, to the question, What can we pursue beyond happiness? is, Beyond happiness there is Christ.

I hope I am wrong, but I suspect that you are disappointed by that answer. You wanted and hoped for something new and exciting, something you had not heard before, something which because of its novelty was not framed in either failure or familiarity. Christ—the answer to all our problems—this is so familiar that it is

[1] "Why Resign from the Human Race?" *Esquire*, September 1959.

dull, so general that it has no cutting edge, so impossible that it is doomed from the beginning. You may think to yourself, I've heard all this before; I've heard it over and over again, scores of sermons on "following Christ," and here I am still in the same old rut, and here is the world still going on in the same old way. The old words have lost whatever original appeal they had; whatever power they had to stir me into action has long since disappeared.

The interesting thing is, and to me it is extremely interesting, that the first and greatest of all, I suppose, of the exponents of Christianity, Paul the Apostle, in his letters never once spoke about "following Christ." In the Gospels, to be sure, Jesus picked out a dozen men and asked them to follow him, to be with him, to learn his "way" and his message, to associate themselves with him in his mission to the world, to be his agents in the new order of things. And the unbelievable thing is that they did. They dropped everything on the spot, and left their families and their business, and followed him.

I should like to pause just long enough to point this out. There have been few men in the history of the world whom other men have been more ready to follow than Jesus, more ready to copy, to imitate, to obey. Remember always that there have been few men in human history more ardently pursued than Jesus. So do not be supercilious about the idea of following Christ, not yet anyway, not as long as there are men like Albert Schweitzer around.

Yet—to go back to what I was saying about Paul—Paul, the most ardent follower of all, never speaks of *following* Christ; not in so many words, or even in words that mean the same thing. He talks about being *in* Christ. "If any man is *in* Christ, he is a new creature." He talks about Christ being *in* him. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth *in* me." In other words, Paul is saying, at least what he is saying to me, is something like this: I did not pursue

Christ; Christ pursued me; I yielded to him, and he made a new man of me.

The first thing I have to say to you, whether you are a student, eighteen or twenty, or an adult, sixty or eighty, is this. When I speak about Christ, I am not speaking only about a man who lived two thousand years ago, nor am I speaking only of a far-distant goal toward which you determine either gladly or grimly to strive, and to which you never really attain. I am speaking about a Power, a Spirit, an Energy, a Vitality, a Life that takes hold of you, gets inside of you, incorporates you into itself, and somehow, in spite of all the ambiguities of your life, your tensions, your problems, your anxieties, your weaknesses, makes a new man out of you, makes you equal to your tasks and a match for whatever befalls you. I am speaking, in other words, of a New Life that pursues you, and which you either accept or reject.

I realize that I am speaking about great things and I know full well that it is infinitely easier to analyze and diagnose the disease than it is to cure it. It is vastly easier to tell people what is wrong with them and to show them what they are not pursuing than it is to hold up before them something which they ought to pursue, and to hold it in such a way that they will want to pursue it.

The only way to see what the New Life is like is to look at Jesus, for the New Life came into the world in him. Not that the life was never in the world before him, but in a dramatic, decisive way the New Life came into the world in Jesus. I have chosen two or three things to say about him, things that I think are particularly relevant to what we are now thinking about, and which will introduce you to him as a Person.

The first is this: he was an *undivided, undisturbed* person, and you who are trained in psychiatric ways of thinking know what a divided and disturbed personality is. He had no basic anxieties. There were no fundamental

cleavages in his character. There were no splits in his personality, as there are in yours and mine. The split may not be great enough to make us psychopathic, but there is in all of us a split, on one side of which are the things we would like to do in our best moments and, on the other, alas, the things we do do. There was no split like that in Jesus; no ulterior motives, no self-centered interests.

This negative fact about him—and I realize that it is negative, but with what tremendously positive implications—this negative fact about him is the fruit of a positive fact. This is the key to the whole understanding of Jesus and one of the most difficult things for modern Americans, for some reason which I do not quite understand, to grasp. The fact of his undivided, undisturbed personality is the fruit of one fact, that he and God were like father and son, in the highest and best relationship which you can conceive of in those terms. He and God were at one. His will was to do the Father's will. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." So that in Jesus, in this particular personality, the immemorial gulf between man and God, which you and I know so well when we stop to think about it, was wiped away. There was no split, there was no alienation, there was perfect community, absolute unity of being between the Father, the Ultimate, the Reality by which we all live, and this Man whom we call his Son.

This undivided, undisturbed personality, therefore, was not only *a* new life. He was *the* New Life. The old life was a kind of self-preserving life, protecting yourself, trying to save your life, looking out for yourself, because of all the anxieties that threaten your existence—death, insecurity, poverty, disease. The old life was a self-preserving life. The New Life was a self-giving life, rooted so completely in confidence and trust that it had no need to fear and nothing at all to be anxious about. More accurately, we should say that the New Life was the life in which the

causes for fear and anxiety still existed, but in which the activity of fear and anxiety was swallowed up in trust and confidence.

This undivided and undisturbed Life, as you might imagine, had enormous power. He had the power to heal people. I think we have not yet begun to understand the meaning of that, often being led astray by the miracle stories which we vainly try to edit for inclusion in a medical journal. Jesus had the power to put a man's body and soul together as they must be if the man is to function well as a human being. He had the power to take distraught human beings, who were going off in all directions at once, and pull them together into integrated whole persons. He had the power to bring human beings together with one another so that the feuds and factions, the tensions that are created by pride, the vanity and other things that you know all too well were somehow not eliminated, but bridged.

He had, above all, that enormous power to bring men and women together with God, the God that they wanted to know and yet feared or resented, to whom they were drawn and from whom they were always trying to escape. He had the power to bring them together with that God because in him they found the love of God. In other words, this Life—again to use a familiar word, but there is none like it—this Life was the Reconciler. It would be hard to describe him in any more adequate language than to say that in him God was reconciling the world unto himself.

Now this is the New Life that began to take hold of people like Paul. It made Paul a new man. It did not make him a more moral man; Paul was already so moral that it was hard both for himself and for society to bear. But it made him a more creative man. It took his hostility and changed it into sympathy. It made him a more happy, useful person in the world. It made him, you see, a recon-

ciler, and wherever he went he began doing the things that Jesus had been doing. He not only told about the Reconciling Life of Jesus; he himself was a source of reconciliation.

This is the New Life that can be in you, and in which you can be incorporated. You say, How in the world can I do it? I could not tell you if I had all day. I can say, however, three things, almost in single sentences that may help you begin. First, say now that you want it. Say to yourself, I want something more than an existence of bread and butter. I want the new self-giving life to take hold of me. I want to be used by it, in what way I do not know, but I want to be drawn up into that New Life. You may have to say it again and again, but say it now.

The second thing is, Keep close to other people who want it. You cannot do it by yourself; there are too many discouragements, too many setbacks. You have to have the support and enthusiasm of other people who sincerely want it.

And the third thing is, Make your supreme aim in life, no matter what you happen to do by way of a career, the communication of the New Life to other people. I know it is easier to say it than to do it, but start doing it!

Some of you who know the works of Paul Tillich may detect in what I have been saying the influence of his thought. I hope you do. There is a paragraph in one of his sermons which is to me as moving as any passage that I know in a modern sermon. Here it is. "When we meet Fascists and Communists, Scientific Humanists, and Ethical Idealists, we should say to them: Don't think we want to convert you. We want only to communicate to you an experience we have had that here and there in the world, and now and then in ourselves, is a New Creation, usually hidden, but sometimes manifest, and certainly manifest in Jesus who is called the Christ."

That New Life, or New Being as Tillich calls it, is some-

thing worth pursuing, and to be an agent of that New Life will lead to a happiness that the pursuit of happiness will miss by a thousand miles and more.

Lead us, O God, through the deep waters of our days to a new understanding and appreciation of the New Life that came into the world in Christ Jesus; and so stir our hearts and minds that we will see in him something new to live by and live for, so that our lives will have new meaning and joy. Amen.

The Secret of the New Life

For more than forty years—the better part of the first half of the twentieth century—Robert Edmond Jones was one of the leading men of the American theater. He was backstage, always behind the scenes, never out front, in play after play, usually as designer, often as director, sometimes as producer. He was perhaps the most imaginative and revolutionary figure in the American theater of his day.

In 1910, shortly after he had been graduated from Harvard, he saw for the first time the Irish Players from the Abbey Theater in Dublin. They were just beginning to present to the American public the plays of Synge and Yeats. In one of his books which has recently been republished called *The Dramatic Imagination,* he describes that experience. After he had seen them play, he said to himself, "What are these rare beings? Where did they come from? What music must they have heard? What books must they have read? What emotions must they have felt? They literally enchanted me."

He went on to say, "I have often asked myself since that time how it was that actors could make me feel such strange emotions as trouble and wonder." He came finally to something that gave him at least a clue to the answer. He found it in an address given by a modern Irish poet to the youth of Ireland. In the address this one line caught his eye, "*Keep in your souls some images of magnificence.*" These Irish players, he knew, had in their souls "some images of

magnificence"—hidden, to be sure, not for the public to see, never to be advertised or named, perhaps not even known to themselves by name—but they were there, none the less; alive, active behind the scenes. This was the secret of their power.

This is the secret of the New Life. I want to pursue that secret, moving out from the center of this suggestive line from the unknown Irish poet—"*Keep in your souls some images of magnificence.*" For our purposes I think it might be just as well to change the word "soul" to "life," for the soul is the life; and the word "magnificence," because of all sorts of wrong connotations it may have, to "greatness." So the line for us reads, *Keep in your life some images of greatness.*

We all have a gallery of images in our minds, mental pictures of people, places and things. Most of the time we are not even conscious of them, but they are there. Some of our mental images are great and some are not, and we know the difference. For instance, you may have in your soul, or your life, an image of a house. It may be a house of happiness, or it may be a house of horror. It may be a place in your childhood that you associate with everything that was safe and good and joyful, or it may be a place associated in your memory with a tragic event which has cast a shadow over your whole life. Nevertheless, the image of the house is there and if it is a childhood home, you could find your way through it in the dark.

All of you have images of a person, probably many persons, who have left an indelible impression upon your lives. One may be the image of a mother or father who adored you and whom you adored, with whom you were knit together, so to speak, in a complete community of understanding and spirit. Or, it may be a picture of a schoolmate who made fun of you when you were young and hurt one of the most vulnerable spots in a human being's life, his youthful pride. Or, hanging close beside it, there may

be a picture of a person you have come to know later on in life, a competitor in business or in love, whom you hate.

Also, there are images of things, many things. I mention just one to suggest all the others. It may be the image of a book that in a very real and literal way opened the gates of life to you. I remember such a book in my life. It may not be a great book, but it was the book that opened up the gates of the mind and let it loose. Or, it may be a book that you read on the sly, surreptitiously, and was your first acquaintance with lust. But whichever it was, the image is there. You can see the book, and the color of the binding, and the print on the page.

Some of these images, of course, are not so great as we think they are, for images like these have the rare and terrible power of seducing us, and we often lack either the ability or the will to discriminate between them. Again, just a few to suggest what I mean. A young girl has in her secret mind, in the galleries that nobody sees, a picture of romantic love in which the great thing, the principal thing, in marriage is the infatuation of two people drawn together like pieces of steel drawn to a magnet, and she does not see that, while there is something wonderful in romantic love, a marriage that is nothing but infatuation will not be a marriage at all in the end.

It may be a man starting out in business and in his mind there is an image—he may not be willing to admit it, but if he is brash enough he will—there is an image of the Madison Avenue Man, slick, bright, successful, well-to-do, knowing everybody worth knowing and on the rise both socially and economically. This image fascinates him as he tries to conform his whole life to its meager dimensions.

A child may have the image of a murderer, a thug, a man who has the power that lies in a gun, and the image is imprinted on his unconscious mind day after day in the things that he sees and hears. He innocently follows the

image not knowing that it is leading him toward hell. Or the nation may have an image of honor and prestige to be defended, the image of false pride that rests in power. Day after day it patterns its policies according to this image not knowing whither it leads.

The point is that these images, good or bad, great or mean, whether we know which or not, are the hidden controls of our lives in a very real way. They are, perhaps more than we realize, the power behind the throne of our being. They are the things to which we are secretly drawn and which unconsciously often drive us to do things which otherwise we might not do. So much for images in general, and their power in our lives. Now we move on to the heart of the matter.

When the New Life takes hold of a person it means, among other things, that one image takes precedence over all the others. It does not, of course, do what we wish it would; it does not immediately wipe all the others out, all the other poor ones, that is. But if we give it a chance, gradually, little by little, it exercises dominion over them! It is the image of a Man, a strange man, strange to us in many ways. He usually first comes to us as a young man with a beard, in a long white robe, out of an entirely different world, living by an entirely different pattern of life. But this strangeness is superficial. The real strangeness goes far deeper than that. He is a man with no money; he gave up his job to undertake a mission for no pay, and the mission was a failure. Yet paradoxically, he himself as we look at him is the only really successful one among us.

Concentrating our attention on this image, we see that it is the image of a man who mingled with men and women of all sorts, people with good reputations and bad ones, the accepted and the unaccepted, not because they entertained *him*, but because he cared infinitely about *them*. He went to dinner in their houses not because there was

any chance that they might give him a contract, but in the hope that he might give them the New Life.

He was in a strange way a man of beauty. We say this even though we have no idea what he looked like. It was the kind of beauty that judges all our superficial beauty. It was the beauty from within that radiates and transforms all that surrounds it, the beauty that you do not often see today because people are so eager in their pursuit of the beauty that lies on the surface of things.

He was a man with real convictions, so many that we could not attempt to analyze them all or even enumerate them, just one or two to suggest the others. He was convinced that in spite of the ambiguities of life, in spite of all the unfairness and injustice that we see around us, life makes sense because God makes life. You may not believe it, but he did, and he believed it not only with his mind but with his whole being. He was convinced that the only way to keep life, that is the only way to have life, life that amounts to anything, life that is rich and full, life that fulfills the promises of human existence, the only way to have that kind of life is to lose it, to give it away, to pour it out, to spend it; not hoard it, not keep it.

He was not afraid of anything. He was not afraid of his opponents, of whom he had many, because—and this is one of the most sensitive spots in us—he was not afraid to die. He was not afraid of his friends because he knew that no matter how great was their adulation they could never turn his head; he knew that there is only One who is good and that is God.

He had no social security whatsoever, yet he was so secure that he could stoop to wash the feet of his friends. Nothing, you see, was beneath him because he, in a way which we can hardly comprehend, was above all things. He had no pride to be offended; he had no prestige to defend; he could be himself and, when it came time to wash the feet of his friends, according to the custom of the day,

he was neither too good nor too great to do it. When he was about to die, he took bread and wine at a common meal, and gave it to his friends, and said, This is my life, this is my body, this is my blood, poured out, given for you, that you may give it to others. This is the New Life, the Life that is given away.

This is the image of a man, the man of Palestine, the man of Galilee, the man Christ Jesus. Gradually, this image of a man, the more you dwell upon it, becomes for you the image of Love, of Life itself, life in its creative mode, contemporary not historic, present not past. When you want to see it, don't look backward, look around you!

I saw it in the Music School in Fontainebleau where there was a resident quartet of young musicians who study in the winter at the Paris Conservatoire. I noticed particularly the first violinist, and one day Mademoiselle Boulanger told me the story of his life. His parents were French Jews and during the Occupation they, along with many of their neighbors, were taken to the gas chambers and put out of the way. One day the authorities came for the children, and this young man was among them, a little boy of three or four. The children were loaded onto a truck to be taken somewhere where they too might be destroyed. But along the way the driver stopped for a smoke. (It is amazing upon what little things life often depends.) He wasn't paying much attention to what was going on. This particular little boy was sitting on the back of the truck, and a Frenchman in the town saw him. At the risk of his life, he snatched him out of the truck saying to himself, He is too good to let go. He took him home. He had six children already. He and his wife were faithful Roman Catholics, but he found out that the boy was a Jew, and he raised him as a Jew. The boy is now a young man who won the *premier prix* at the Paris Conservatoire. This is an image of the New Life.

We never see the New Life around us in perfection,

granted. But what we do see, imperfect though it be, is nevertheless a revelation of the perfect love that casts out fear. This, increasingly, we say is the only thing that really matters; this is real; this is ultimate; this is God. The other images in the gallery of our mind are not necessarily bad; some of them are bad and some of them are good. But often they are unworthy of the attention we give them. When you remember the things that you have been striving for during the day, and lying awake at night worrying about, most of these shrink into insignificance when they come anywhere near this image of the Man who is the image of the Love of God.

When this happens, there begins to be a New Life rising in you from below, or coming down from above. Unconsciously your soul begins to take on the form and shape of this Supreme Image of "magnificence."

An actor submits to the demands of a great role, a great character; Hamlet, for example. The actor lives and breathes as a man, yet as he surrenders himself to the character he is to portray, Hamlet begins to live in him and, toward the end of the play, it is Hamlet who speaks, Hamlet who acts, not the man. Paul said, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Keep in your soul this Image of Magnificence, for this is the secret of the New Life.

Open, O God, the eyes of those who have not yet seen the image of the New Life. Help those of us who have seen it to keep it fresh, to protect it from all the other images that threaten to put it out of the way, and show us once again in the bread and the wine the image of him who gave himself that we might live. Amen.

The Beginning of the New Life

One day in the early part of his ministry Jesus was preaching by the edge of the lake. Crowds followed him wherever he went and on this occasion the crowd was so great that it almost pushed him into the water. There were two boats on the beach; one belonged to a fisherman called Simon. Jesus apparently knew him and asked him to push his boat out a little from the shore. Simon did it, and Jesus sat in the boat and spoke to the people from there.

That picture is worth stopping to look at for a moment, the picture of Jesus speaking to the people, informally, naturally and simply, in the open air, sitting down as a Jewish rabbi always did when he spoke to the people. The crowd was gathered around the edge of the water in eagerness to hear what he had to say. They were hungry and he was feeding them the bread of life. Whether they understood him or not, they listened to every word he said.

When he finished, he said to Simon, "Take the boat farther out and let down the nets." And Simon said, "We have fished all night long, and we have caught nothing; but we will do as you say." You can almost hear the tone of his voice, the repressed disgust that a child puts into his voice when he responds to what he considers to be a stupid request of his parents. Yet he did it, and after a while the nets were so full that they began to break, and his partners, James and John, the owners of the other boat, came to his rescue. Both boats could hardly hold all the fish!

Simon was dumbfounded. What did he do, do you remember? If you don't remember, what do you think he would do? What would you have done? Sing? Shout? Cheer for the great thing that had happened? That is not what Simon did. He got down on his knees and said, "Leave me to myself, Lord. I am a sinner." Why did he do that? Whatever made him say that? Why would his good fortune as a fisherman make him think of his bad record as a man? The usual answer to that question is that he did it because of the miracle that he saw. What he saw he assumed to be a miracle, and you can easily understand why he did. He and his partners had been fishing all night and hadn't caught anything. They were fishermen; they knew how the fish ran, they knew every twist and turn of the waters of that lake. This man was no fisherman, yet the fish ran at his word. This was miraculous. This was a sign of the power of God, and of God's activity in the world.

When you come into the presence of God, you don't stand at attention like a soldier on guard duty; you get down on your knees like a man who feels like a worm. That is what Peter did. This man Jesus was his contemporary and acquaintance, if not yet his friend, but there was something strange about him, and at that moment Simon felt the gulf between them wider than ever, the gulf between the good life of Jesus and his own shabby existence. It was a difference in kind and quality that he felt. It was the way a man feels when he meets the Infinite.

One competent Biblical scholar writes in a commentary, "What Simon did was an expression of dismay evoked by the supernatural." Perhaps it was, and I am the last person to say dogmatically that it was not. It may not only be the correct explanation of Peter's behavior but it may also be the complete explanation. Certainly it is a possible explanation which we in this twentieth century would do well to try to understand.

But recently as I was reading this story it said something else to me; or perhaps I should say, it said something more to me. One of the extraordinary things about the Bible is that you can read the stories in it all your life and know them almost by heart, when suddenly they say something to you that they have never said before, either because you read them in an unfamiliar version or because—and this is more likely—there is something in you which before was either dormant or not yet present, and which makes you sensitive and ready to hear what the story has to say. This is what happened to me once again as I read the story about Peter and the miraculous draught of fish in the inimitable paraphrase of the Dutch architect, Piet Worm.[1]

Jesus told Peter to take the boat out and let down the nets. He did it, but only reluctantly, almost begrudgingly. He knew better, he was a fisherman; this man was a carpenter and it would be better for him to stick to his trade. In other words, when it came to fishing, he didn't trust Jesus. Then the fish filled the nets, the boats were loaded, and Peter's eyes began to smart. Can you feel at all what Peter felt? I think I can. Can you think of some of the questions he probably asked himself? I think Peter's mind may have run something like this: When will I ever learn? Why didn't I trust him? Why did I presume to set myself up against him? Why did I do what he said only with reluctance, and begrudgingly? Because I am a sinner, and I trust myself more than I trust the highest that I know; that is the reason I did what I did.

Has anything like that ever happened to you? It has to me over and over again, and most often in a way something like this. I approach a difficult situation. I can see no way through it. It looks to me impassable. I dread it; I am afraid: it is something I can't meet, and I can't see any way through it. I do not have the resources I need to meet it,

[1] Piet Worm, *Stories from the New Testament*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959.

and I am thoroughly frightened. Then without any conscious effort on my part, the gate begins to open of its own accord. Someone appears out of the blue, something happens that I never dreamed would happen, and I go through —not because of anything done *by* me, so much as because of something done *for* me—and as I interpret this event, I say to myself, This is of God. This is one of those signs to me of God's never-failing care. I can trust him for the rest of my days. I can go up to any impossible situation without fear, knowing that when the time comes, the way through will be made possible.

Then a similar situation occurs again. Because of what happened the first time, I know that I need not fear. But I do! I am frightened again; I begin to calculate my own resources, and I see that they are not adequate; I begin to feel what you call panic. Again the way opens, and I feel the way Peter felt. I feel like getting down on my knees and saying, "When, Lord, will I ever learn? When will I ever learn to trust the highest and the best that I know? When will I learn not to put more confidence in what I can do than in what you can do. I have had so many proofs of your care, and yet I was afraid. I feel like a fool. I am a sinner." This is what sin is—the failure to trust God, the attempt to live as though there were no God.

I cannot say with any certainty that this is the explanation of Peter's action. We are free to use our imagination and our powers of speculation when it comes to interpreting the Bible, but we are not free to be dogmatic about our speculations. Whether or not this is the explanation of Peter's action I do not know. This, however, I can say with certainty, and I should like to say it with as much clarity as I can. Whenever and wherever you meet the Highest in life, you are more than likely to see, for the first time perhaps, the lowest in yourself.

You think, for instance, that you are a dedicated indi-

vidual, that you have a job to which you are committed, a role in life to which you are dedicated, a way of life to which you have pledged your allegiance. You go on your way relatively complacent with the degree of your dedication. Then you meet, quite unexpectedly, one who is supremely dedicated, one in whose dedication there is no suggestion of alloy, nothing that dissipates the strength of it. When you meet that person, you begin to see the cracks in your own dedication, the lapses, the false notes.

You think that you are, relatively speaking, an unselfish person. I would be willing to wager that if I should ask you now whether you think you are an unselfish person, you would say, "Yes, I do think so. I try to keep the Golden Rule; I try to do to others what I would have them do to me." (You might not actually say that because you know how pompous it would sound, but that doesn't mean that you wouldn't think it.) Then you meet someone who is absolutely and sublimely selfless. See what it does to the picture of your own unselfishness, how it shows up the dark corners, the mixed motives and the ulterior aims, the selfish strains that often take the life out of your effort to be unselfish.

You think you are taking life pretty well, the ups and downs, the shocks, the disappointments and the hurts—you think you are taking it all rather well. Then you see someone who is taking it magnificently, taking more than you are taking, and taking it with a finer spirit, and you see yourself in a darker light.

To make this more specific, suppose you meet, as I did recently in the pages of a popular magazine, a young doctor. His name is Tom Dooley; he is thirty-two years old. In 1954 he was a doctor in the United States Navy, the doctor on the U.S.S. *Montague*. He was in the troubled area around Indo-China where the suffering was so severe that it could hardly be imagined. He saw the refugees fleeing from North Vietnam; as he tried to minister to them,

he saw the depths of human misery that he had never guessed before. He promised that when he finished his stint in the Navy he would return, and he did. He found that in Indo-China there was one doctor for every 200,000 people. In these few years he has founded three hospitals; he treats 35,000 patients a year. He said in an interview, modestly, "I am just an instrument, a tool; I need the people to lift me up." He came to New York to be operated on for cancer, and the surgeons are hopeful for a complete recovery. As he prepared to go back to his hospital in Laos, he said, "This operation is just an incident." Just an incident! No wonder the distinguished New York University Professor, Dr. Howard Rusk, referred to him as "the splendid American."

What does it do to you when you meet a person like that? It stirs you, of course; but doesn't it also stun you? Doesn't it make you realize how "unsplendid" you often are? It does me. You very likely feel the way the young doctor feels when people compare him with Albert Schweitzer. He is humiliated. "That man is majestic," he protests. "I am just trying to do a job that needs to be done."

You may not like to see this side of yourself, the darker corners of your life. I don't suppose any of us enjoy it. Let me tell you this; if you don't want to see the darker side of your own nature, don't come anywhere near Christ. Because the closer you get to him, the more clearly will you see yourself, and the contrast between you and him. He trusts; you doubt. His perfect purpose is fixed; yours is conveniently flexible. He is satisfied with the necessities of life; you crave the luxuries. He loves before he judges; you judge before you love. If you ever really meet him—I mean *really* meet him—you are going to have to do and say what Simon did and said, "Leave me to myself, Lord. I am a sinner." It is solemn, and sobering.

Yet this is not the end of the story. You may not remem-

ber what Jesus said to Simon at this point and, if you don't, you must be told because it is crucial. Jesus looked at him and said, "Don't be afraid." Don't be afraid of what? Don't be afraid of *me?* Perhaps, but I think that he meant something more than that. What he was saying is, Don't be afraid of your sin. Don't be afraid of your weakness. Thank God that you see it and recognize it for what it is, because you cannot amount to much until you do. But don't brood over it; don't mull it over and over in your mind. There is too much to be done, and from this moment on you will be a fisher of men!

In other words, what Jesus was saying to Simon was, You can use your weakness, and you can, to a certain degree, overcome it as you lose yourself in a task that is too great for you. Begin! Get up on your feet!

One of the dangers, I fear, of being shown the skeletons in your closet, whether it be by the psychiatrist who helps you to see what you are really like, or by the preaching of the new Biblical theology which makes you remember how depraved human nature can be and often is—however it is you see it—one of the dangers of being shown the skeletons in your closet is that you yourself get shut up in the closet with the skeleton. It is no place for a man to be. Failure and guilt then become your daily companions until you lose the power to do the things that are to be done.

If you see now, as perhaps you may not have seen before, the places where you fall down and are weak, where you fall short, where you miss the point completely—this is what Christ has to say to you: Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the weakness that is woven into your nature. Don't be afraid of the slips and mistakes you have made. Once you see them for what they are, and do the best you can to correct them, leave them alone. There is too much to be done in the world to be wasting your emotional energy on fear of your own weakness. You have a part to play in the world, and God can use you as you are and, as he

uses you, he will make you more and more the person he would like you to become.

That is the message that comes to me from the story about Simon and his strange behavior at the time of his great success. I know that there are people who are frustrated by the sense of their own inadequacy. They dwell upon it, magnify it, until it paralyzes them. The message is this: God can use you as you are now, and as he uses you, he will make you more and more the person he wants you to become.

The story ends with one magnificent line of narrative. "That day Simon and James and John left everything and followed Jesus." That was the beginning of the New Life for them and, so far as I know, it never begins at any other place or in any other way.

O Thou living Christ, the highest that we know, may we never fear when in thy presence we see the lowest that we are. Give us the grace and the courage to rise up and do our best with what we have, in the confidence that thou canst make us into the men that we should be. Amen.

PART II

The New Life Incarnate in Christ

The Depth That Is in Christ

One of the most interesting things about our use of words is the way we often use the same word to mean quite different things. Take the word "deep," for instance. If you say that a well is *deep,* you are saying that the distance, or the space, between the top of the well and the bottom is great. If, on the other hand, you say that a book is *deep,* you are not talking about space or distance at all. You are saying that the book is not easy, light reading, that the meaning of the book is not likely to be grasped by the casual reader who will not take time enough to read it carefully and thoughtfully.

The same thing is true of the same word in its substantive form. If you speak about the *depth* of the sea, you are talking about a distance in space that can be measured. But if you say of a portrait, That portrait has *depth,* you are not talking about space or distance; you are saying that the artist who painted the portrait has not only caught the features of the person he painted and made a good likeness of him, he has gone far beyond that. He has caught the quality of that particular person's inner life and revealed it in a way no candid camera ever could. The portrait, in other words, has *depth.*

This is one of many examples of the way we elevate words. The word "deep" was used originally in reference to space, but we now use it to describe spiritual qualities and attitudes.

Speaking of portraits brings us a little closer to the subject of this chapter. There are four authentic portraits of Jesus. Very early in its life the Christian community chose from among many portraits of Jesus four and said, These four are the authentic portraits of our Lord and Master; upon these we put the sign of our approval. The artists, if we may refer to them as such, were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each artist painted the same figure, and the figure is always unmistakably the same in each of the four portraits, but each one approached that figure from a peculiar, personal angle of vision.

Mark, for example, as he sketched the portrait of Jesus, sketched it rapidly, in bold strokes, and caught to an extraordinary degree the power of Jesus. The figure that you see in Mark's portrait is like a rushing, mighty wind. Matthew, on the other hand, standing in a different position, looking at the same figure from a slightly different angle, caught the authority of Jesus. His portrait is sterner, more severe. The word of Jesus is law, and it is not for you to choose whether you obey it or not; you disobey it to your doom. And if you are not there when your name is called, the door is closed! This, you see, is a quite different accent in the character of Jesus.

Luke caught the compassion of Jesus. He traced the more delicate strains of Christ's understanding and love for people who were out of bounds, beyond the pale. He painted the portrait of the One who came primarily to seek and to save the lost.

John caught something else, something that the others appreciated but not with the same intensity. He caught the more elusive quality that we have called *depth*. His is a portrait of the same figure, with all the power, authority, and compassion of the others, but his portrait has a depth that the others do not have. His drawing is of a young man, a Jew who lived in Galilee and suffered under Pontius Pilate, but beyond that and through that you see

Someone who was in the world from the very beginning. He made the world, and without him was not anything made that was made. You may not understand at once what the artist means; you may not know exactly what he is trying to show you, but you know that you are facing a portrait that has depth.

That is what I should like you to look at now, and with these two things especially in mind. As you look at this portrait, you may appreciate more than you have before the unique contribution of St. John to our knowledge of Christ, and also, as you look at it, you yourself may perceive more clearly and enter more fully than you have before into the depth that is in Christ Jesus.

You do not appreciate the depth of anything the first time you see it. You have to live with it. This is true of a place. A tourist in Boston sees the city and gets a rough impression of what it is like. He is likely to be impressed by the peculiarities of the city. He sees, if he is in the right place, the old brick sidewalks, the colonial houses, the Wren-like spires. He sees the low skyline which is strange to Americans who have grown up among skyscrapers. If he goes downtown, he sees the narrow, crooked streets. But he does not grasp the depth of Boston, he does not know what Boston is really like, not in one visit. You have to live in it for that. You have to breathe its air, love its bricks, know its people, and be saturated with its atmosphere before you can say that you begin to sense this other element, this element of depth, in the city of Boston.

If that is true of a place, it is certainly far more true of a person. The first time you meet a person you see a great deal. You see what he looks like; you get a general impression of the kind of person he is. You have a feeling about him, whether you trust him or distrust him. You see the way he walks and you hear the way he talks; you observe the way he carries himself, the way he behaves. But you do not get the depth of a person simply by seeing him once.

You have to live with him, be near him, over a long period of time, before you appreciate his real quality.

St. John the Evangelist caught the depth of Christ because he had lived with him so long. We do not know exactly who St. John was, and as long as people read the New Testament, his identity will be a moot question. There is no way of telling precisely, beyond the shadow of a doubt, who wrote the Fourth Gospel, but the tradition is that he was an old man, and everything in the Gospel confirms that tradition. For the picture that John gives us of Christ could only be drawn by someone who not only had lived with him as a companion, walking with him over the dusty roads of Judaea, but who in some way lived *in* him the way a man's body lives in the air. So John lived in Christ decade after decade. He walked in his light through all the dark ways of his own personal existence. He gloried in his love, and came to see that among all the traits that compose the character of Christ this is the essential one, and that the one thing which would distinguish the disciples of this Man is their love for one another. He gloried in this love, he lived in it, he breathed it the way we breathe air. He lived on his life the way we live on meat and drink. What he wrote, therefore, was the fruit of this life-long association.

His portrait may not have as accurate an outline as the other three. I personally think that it does not; other people think differently. But accuracy of outline is not what John is concerned with; profundity, depth, is his concern. His portrait leads us toward a new appreciation of the depth that was in Christ; none of the others has it to the same degree, though in none is it entirely absent.

Perhaps we should say in passing that this is the only way you will get to know the real depth of Christ. You may be thinking to yourself now that this is something quite beyond you, that you never even thought about entering into this sort of an experience and see no possibility

of it. Perhaps not. But this much is certain, the only way you can ever have anything approaching it is to live with Christ. You can see almost at a glance the photographic image of Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem; brought up in a plain, simple family in Nazareth; a carpenter by trade; the friend of sinners by nature. He healed the sick, taught the people, preached about the Kingdom of God, and was put to death because he threatened the *status quo*. You do not need to linger long to see that much.

But you will never appreciate the depth of Christ on any such casual acquaintance as that. To do that you must live with him, think about him, do your work—whatever it is—for his sake; try to be more and more like him even though you realize that you can never come anywhere near him, but try, nevertheless, to be more and more like him in your character and in your nature, in your sensitiveness to the needs of men and your willingness to try to meet them. A glance at him now and then will give you no more idea of what he is really like than one reading of *Hamlet* will give you any idea of the real depths of that play.

When you once see the depth of anything, you are almost bound to describe it in symbolic language, simply because there is no other language available.

I shall give you an illustration that comes very close to some of us and that will show you what I mean. A group of men were sitting around a table discussing the possibility of life on Mars. In that group were the late philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, and Mark Howe, author and distinguished citizen. After the learned men had discussed the possibility of life on Mars, Whitehead stood up and said, "Whether there be life on Mars or not, I do not know; but if there should be life on Mars, I nominate Mark Howe as the man to be sent there to represent the human race at its best."

Do you see what I mean by symbolic language? All the

facts and figures about Mark Howe in *Who's Who* could not begin to give you the sense of depth that that symbolic language gives you. It may not be true in a literal sense, but it is true in a far deeper sense, and even if you never knew the man, you would know that here is a person of real significance.

This is essentially what John did in his portrait of Christ. The others told the facts, and perhaps told them more accurately and in more perfect chronological order than he did. The others called Jesus the Messiah, which was a good, familiar Hebrew title, coming right up out of the land and soil. There was nothing symbolic about it; it was no more poetic than the title of our President. It was the name of the person who would deliver the nation from the enemy. John kept it, but he went further than that.

He said that Jesus is the Bread of life. His life is to a man's soul what bread is to a man's body. He is not one of the luxuries of life; he is one of the necessities. Without him, without his life and love, your life will wither away. Jesus is the Light of the world, not like the light of the sun which as it rises puts to flight the darkness; he is more like a searchlight that sends a shaft of light through the darkness, driving it back farther and farther on either side so you can find your way through the night. John knew that because he had walked in that light.

Jesus, John said, is the Fountain of living water. He is not one of the wells that run dry. There is in him inexhaustible energy and sustenance for the people who come to him to drink of the living water of life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He can raise people from the dead. He can take a life that is withering away and bring it back so that it flowers again. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Think of all these words that he uses, so basic, so elementary, so simple, nothing national or local about them, words that people of every race, culture and nationality

can understand because they are universal words—words like way, truth, life, bread, light, and water.

John did not stop there. He went on to say that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is the Love of God looking for you, searching for you because he cares for you, wanting to draw you back into his flock, not against your will but because you wish to come home. He is the Vine; we are the branches. He is the life and if we are cut off from him, we are lifeless. He is in the Father and the Father is in him; he and the Father are one.

Do you see how the depth is growing? You may be beyond your depth at this point, but follow me. The climax he reached in the beginning, in the very first chapter of his Gospel, when he said, Jesus, the local carpenter of Nazareth who died on Calvary, is the Word of God—the express purpose, intention and will of God—made flesh. You cannot go much deeper than that.

John then took the facts about Jesus and used them to fill out and give flesh to these great themes; he rearranged them to suit his purpose, included what would amplify it and left out what would not. As you read his Gospel, you begin to get a glimpse of the depth that one man found in Christ.

People, both young and old, constantly say to me, I can't understand the divinity of Christ, and I don't really believe it. My suggestion to them is that they change their approach. Instead of beginning with a proposition about the nature of Christ, begin with John's Gospel and try to see the depth that is in Christ. If they go far enough, they will come to the depth which is the ground of all being, namely, God.

This matter, then, will be not only a matter of intellectual assent. It will be your response to Someone you have encountered, Someone you have seen, Someone you know, and you will be able to say, I do not understand the various formulations that men have made about the nature of

Christ, but I know that there is in Christ a depth that is so profound that it goes right to the heart of all things, namely, to God himself.

Then with this portrait in your hands, you can go your way, trying to live with Jesus so that more and more, every day of your life, you will be able to say, He and the Father are one, and through him and in him I see God; he *is* God; apart from him I can do nothing.

Let us keep silence before this Portrait of Christ which is far greater than we can wholly grasp, yet which we can appreciate and respond to with all our being.

O God, show us the Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, in whom all thy fullness dwelleth; that we, going through dark and perilous waters, may know thee in him; we ask this through him, and in his spirit. Amen.

The Uniqueness of Christ

To the modern man, whether he is inside the Church or out of it, one of the most startling statements in the New Testament occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. "There is no salvation by anyone else." This One in whom the New Life was incarnate, he alone is the source of real life. If the average American stops to think about it at all, he is likely to be puzzled by it; it seems to be an impossible claim to make for anyone.

A great deal depends, of course, on what you mean by salvation. If you mean being let loose from the things in this life which hold you down, things like fear, guilt, and bad habits, that is one thing. If, on the other hand, you mean by salvation being let off from the punishment in the next life for the sins you have committed in this life, that is quite another thing. But whatever you mean by salvation, to say that salvation is to be found in one man only, and that apart from him there is no such emancipation either here or hereafter, seems to a great many people today like a fantastic statement. It is almost like saying that there is one doctor, and one only, in the whole world who can make men well; or that there is one teacher in the whole world, and one only, who can lead men to the truth.

A great deal also depends on the person about whom the claim is made. It has been made about many people, either by themselves or by their followers, preferably by their followers. Hitler claimed that there was no salvation

apart from the Aryan race, and more particularly from the Germanic peoples, and thousands believed him. Krushchev is now claiming that there is no salvation apart from Communism of which he is the temporary incarnation, and millions of people in the world believe him and would die for their belief.

But the claim in the New Testament, and this is what is so interesting to me about it, is made by an ex-fisherman about one of his contemporaries and friends who only shortly before had been executed by the government as a troublemaker. Peter was being cross-examined by the authorities, you may remember, after he and John had met a cripple sitting by one of the city gates begging for money. They made him well, able to walk again. They were put in jail overnight, rather peremptorily, and the next day they were cross-examined by men who asked them, "By what power did you cure the cripple?" Peter said, in effect, and said it directly and bravely, "You and everybody else in Jerusalem know perfectly well that the man in question was made whole by the power of Jesus of Nazareth whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead. He is the stone that the builders rejected; he is become the head of the corner. There is no salvation by anyone else, and there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved."

It is an extraordinary claim under any circumstances, but even more so when you stop to think that it was made at a time when the Christian movement was hardly more than a local stir, and Jesus, in the mind of the public, hardly more than a dimly remembered criminal.

Perhaps even more extraordinary is the fact that the claim has persisted through the ages, much more carefully thought out, sometimes lacking in the spontaneity and freshness of the early days; but nevertheless it has persisted, has made its way into the formal beliefs of the Christian Church, and has been the incentive of missionaries around

the globe. For Christians have continued to believe, to say, and to act on the assumption that there is something about Christ both unique and ultimate, and that in the end, the world will have to come to terms with him.

Do you believe it? In either sense of the word "salvation," either as the liberation in this life from the things that are crippling you, or as pardon in the next life for the things you have done wrong in this life, do you believe that it is to be found nowhere except in Jesus? Do you think that a good Hindu, to be quite specific, is a lost soul and, if so, in what sense? Do you think that real life for the Chinese people depends entirely on their being drawn into the Christian community? Do you think that a person who has not been baptized into Christ is doomed to eternal punishment? In brief, do you think that Christ is unique and that Christianity has a universal claim upon the world, something like the claim that Communists are making upon it? Do you think that there is no real salvation apart from Christ, or don't you?

Some of you do not know what you think because you haven't thought it through. You haven't thought enough about it, or clearly enough about it, so that your thinking is confused and fuzzy. A few people in any Christian congregation are already convinced that apart from Christ there is no salvation; one or two may be militant about it. Most of them instinctively agree with Arnold Toynbee when he says, "We must purge our Christianity of the traditional belief that Christianity is unique." I may be wrong, but my guess is that that sentence rings a bell in the minds of eight out of ten American Protestants. Large numbers of serious-minded Christians today, who travel quickly from one end of the world to the other and are much more tolerant of other people's religion (though not of their politics!) than they were fifty years ago, are very likely to agree with Mr. Toynbee and say that one of the things that Christianity must do if it is to keep its position

among the great religions of the world is to purge itself of the traditional belief that it is unique. In other words, it must admit that there is salvation to be found in other religions.

If you do not know what you think about this, it is time you did. Either Christ is unique or he is not. Either Christianity has a universal claim upon the world or it has not. And if Christ is unique, if Christianity has a universal claim, in what does it consist, and how shall it be made? In other words, the subject is a vast one, *the Uniqueness of Christ*. I am not going to tell you what to think. My purpose is to try to open the subject and to stir your minds to think straight about it, and to bring you sufficiently into the presence of the real Christ so that you can think from the center and not from the circumference.

I am going to point out only three things that are to be said about this large and fascinating subject. The first is that Christians have often been fanatical and arrogant in their claim, and the first thing for us to do is to acknowledge it with penitence. They have tried, often by force and persecution, to impose their belief on other people. The Indians on this continent did not all become Christians of their own free will, not by any means. They became Christians because they did not dare do otherwise. And every Christian should remember that there has been more than one Spanish Inquisition, many more, and not all of them have been sponsored by Catholics or taken place on foreign soil.

People in the eastern part of the world have often been forced by more subtle means to accept Christianity. It was the price they often paid for western improvements, and the Christian religion was the necessary accompaniment of western technology. Also, Christians have often been blind and insensitive to the spiritual lives and needs of other people, to the depths of their spiritual insights, to the reality of their own religious traditions, and they have

barged into foreign lands and talked to the people as though they had never seen a spark of light and never known a grain of truth. They have often tried to make people in the east accept Christianity in western dress, and in doing so, have often confused the vessel with the thing contained in it.

They have done all this in spite of their rather poor record. For Christians must not forget that their world is scarred by war more seriously and more deeply than many other parts of the world where Christianity has had no influence. Christian countries have been ravaged by both political and religious wars. From the thirteenth century on, for four centuries, there was war between the Papacy and the Empire, and for one century at least, if not more, after the Reformation it was war between the Protestants and the Catholics, which in one way still continues, though usually undeclared (not in Spain, however!) In other words, we have not too good a record on which to base our all-inclusive claim.

I shall never forget when the Bishop of Ceylon was here two or three years ago, preaching at the evening service. After the service we went to the rectory and sat and talked. Naturally, I had many questions to ask him about Ceylon. I said, "What is the chief problem that you have as Bishop?" He said, "It is this. The native religion of Ceylon is Buddhism, and my chief difficulty in trying to speak to the people about Christianity is that Buddhists in that area have no record of violence!"

The Christian claim to uniqueness often seems to the non-Christian world an arrogant claim with no real facts to support it. But there was no such arrogance in Christ. He was what he was. Whatever claims he made, or were made about him by his followers, were made without violence and confirmed by what he did. They were never imposed upon anyone by force either directly or indirectly. And above everything else, he was the revelation of the

unself-centered God, who loved the world so much that he gave himself to the world.

The first thing, then, that we can say, and say without any reservation or qualification at all, is this: *An arrogant or a fanatical Christian is no true follower of Christ.*

The second thing takes us into deeper waters and is more positive. These deeper things are always more difficult to put into words, and I do it with great hesitation because I know I shall not do it adequately, but this is the way I would begin. When a person finds the key that unlocks the door of his life, he is not likely to be dispassionate about the discovery, any more than he is when he finds the love of his life. He is more likely to sing about it, and to act as though this one person were the only person in the world. He is likely to go overboard in the enthusiasm of his new-found life. That is a common experience shared by almost everyone.

Moreover, if the door is one of the great doors, when he finds the key that unlocks it, he cannot help feeling that the key that unlocks it for him will unlock it for others. The door that opens from guilt into forgiveness is the same door whether it is in Boston or in Baghdad, and the same key will unlock it wherever it may be. The door that opens from self-centeredness and fear into freedom is the same door whether it is at the North or the South Pole, or on the Equator, and the same key will unlock it wherever it is. The door from primitive cruelty into kindness and understanding is the same door whether it is in India, France, or the U.S.A., and the chances are that the same key will unlock it wherever it is.

Put it another way, and try to approach this truth from a slightly different angle. When you come to something that you recognize as ultimate, you find at the same time that it is universal. To make it as simple as I can, let me say this. When you discover the ultimate truth that two and two make four you know that it is universal as well as

ultimate, and that two and two make four everywhere. You are no longer dealing with a local but a universal fact.

One of the things I learned when I was at the Music School in Fontainebleau was that when a creative artist, say in music, discovers one of the ultimate principles of composition, he also discovers that that ultimate principle is universal. It is just as binding on Stravinsky as it is on Bach, and just as inescapable. In other words, the universe is so much of a unity that once you find one of the great strains of it, you find that that same strain runs through the whole of it. So in life, if you discover the ultimate principle that he that loseth his life shall find it, that principle is universal and it is just as true for a savage in Africa as it is for a scholar in Boston. If there be any saving power in it here, there will be saving power in it there. And if life lived on any other principle is doomed here, it will be doomed there.

But a principle by itself does not unlock a door until it becomes a key. I know that there are many things that people may say in response to that, especially a scientist. But on the whole I think it stands. A principle, that is, an intellectual principle that you grasp only in your mind, is not likely to open one of the locked doors in your life until it becomes a key, something that you can take hold of and fit into the lock. Ideas are powerful wherever you meet them, but when they are incarnate in a person their power is infinitely greater.

The Christian's experience is something like this. Principles which he may have known all his life in Christ become a key, *the* key that unlocks the door. I cannot say more than that by way of description. Those who have not experienced anything like it, I fear, will not make much sense of it, but this is what the Christian experience is at its best. This is what is behind the statement in the Acts of the Apostles, behind the claim that Christianity is unique. The experience is that the general principles, which

you may often find in Greek philosophy, and in the other high religions of the world, once became incarnate in a person, in Christ; and, like a key, they then had the power that the principles by themselves never had. (Obviously, this is not the whole truth of the Revelation of God in Christ; it is a view of the truth that may help us understand and appreciate the uniqueness of Christianity.)

What I should like to say to Christians everywhere, and especially to missionaries—and I should have to say it very humbly because they have gone into the dangerous places where I have never gone—what I should like to say is this: the Key is the thing, and the Key is the Cross, and the Cross is none other than the love that understands, suffers, dies, and rises again; not in the abstract, but in Christ. This is the key that unlocks the door and, if it unlocks it here, it will unlock it everywhere.

What I should like to say to all Christians is, Give them the *key,* not your theories about it, and certainly not the case you carry it in. *Give* it to them; don't thrust it upon them, or impose it upon them. Give it to them gladly and, if they do not want it, let them drop it. As you give it to them, look very carefully at some of their own keys, and see if they are not shaped something like a Cross.

I cannot, therefore, agree with Arnold Toynbee, though I realize that it is a rather presumptuous thing to say about one whose scholarship and integrity I admire so much; but I cannot agree with him when he says that we must purge our Christianity of the traditional belief that Christianity is unique. I believe that Christianity is unique because Christ is unique and that, being unique, his claim is a universal claim.

I can agree with him, however, when he says this: "We can have conviction without fanaticism. We can have belief and action without arrogance or self-centeredness or pride." Do you think we can? I hope we can, but it will not be easy. There is something about us as human beings

that the more strongly we feel about something, the more combative we are likely to become. If you doubt that, listen to intelligent people slander the man who is their candidate's opponent in a Presidential election. It is not natural, I suppose, for us to have convictions without fanaticism, or belief and action without arrogance or pride. But it is possible, I believe. It has been done, and I should go so far as to say this—and I dislike rhetorical generalities—that at this point in the world's history, if we cannot do it, we are lost.

One of the great lessons we in America must learn, both in politics and in religion, is how to have great convictions together with great compassion and understanding. To put it even more strongly, we must learn—and it will not be easy—how to be absolutely loyal and infinitely humble. It is not a common combination; you will grant that. There is only one place under heaven where we can learn it, as far as I know, and that is in Christ. It is not so much learning it as it is living in him sufficiently to let him live in us, so that we can keep at the same time our deepest and most absolute loyalties together with our infinite humility. When we come anywhere near doing that, there is no doubt in our minds that there is no salvation by anyone else.

O God, we pause now in silence to acknowledge our dependence upon thee and to pledge once again our allegiance to him whom we believe to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; help us to keep our loyalties strong and our humility great, that we may never be convicted of pride or arrogance because we are followers of Jesus. Amen.

The Power of Jesus

Staring us in the face is the fact that under the shining surface of our national prosperity and power are great caverns of spiritual and moral decay. Those caverns have been ruthlessly exposed by shocking events during recent months, and we can no longer be blind to their existence.

It is almost impossible for some people to see this situation clearly because they are in no way directly involved in it; their lives still move in relatively untroubled waters, and therefore they cannot believe that things are as bad as they really are. It is difficult for most of us to see it because, although we are not directly involved in it, indirectly we are so deeply involved, materialism has so subtly infiltrated the very air we breathe, that we are not aware of it. If you smell the chlorine in the New York water long enough, you cease to smell it. Likewise, it is hard to see a slump when you are in one, and harder still to know that you are on a moral decline once you have started to slide. That is what prophets are for.

But the encouraging thing is that many people do see it and are responding to men who are speaking out about it, not only men in the Church but in the secular world as well. People from every quarter give serious indication of their desire to rally around those who are concerned about the situation. Their question is, What can *we* do about it? How can we restore the moral and spiritual life of the

people once it begins to slip? We want to do something, but what can we do?

As we turn to that question, we should say at the very beginning that there is no magic formula that will miraculously put things right. Madison Avenue, with all its wits and ingenuity, will never be able to do it with a slogan. Prosperity may be kept going by slogans but integrity, once it begins to go, will never be brought back so easily. And those of us who have any experience in dealing with people, either children or adults, know that we will never do it by scolding people, or by denouncing the things that we think are wrong, or by ranting against corruption.

In my experience, there is only one way to make people good, and that is to show them a vision of goodness that has the power to draw them toward it. Reinhold Niebuhr, I suppose, has been one of the most severe critics of our civilization and culture, and yet when he was a younger man and still pastor of a church in Detroit, he wrote in his notebook something that we must not forget. Remembering who wrote it, the significance of it is greater than it otherwise would be. "*People must be charmed into righteousness.*" He wrote that sentence after he had heard one of his colleagues preach, a minister whom he admired very much. He went on to say that when this particular preacher wanted to convict Detroit of her sins, he preached a sermon on the City of God and let all the limitations of that get-rich-quick metropolis emerge by implication. This is the secret of great preachers; they have drawn the curtain aside so that people could see the best there is. The sooner a man in the ministry learns that, the more effective he will be.

The One who has charmed more people into righteousness than any other is Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, we shall now turn our attention away, temporarily, from the valley of corruption, with its dry bones, and look at him who is the vision of goodness, a vision that is remark-

able because it is so vivid, so real, and yet so mysterious. This is not intended to make you do anything in particular; it is intended to help you see him, to see him more clearly that you may love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

The first thing people noticed about Jesus was his power. It was the first thing they talked about. He had power to heal the sick. The record puts it very simply: "Everyone with sick friends brought them to Jesus, and he cured them." Some of them were suffering from physical diseases and some from mental disturbances but, whatever they were, he had the power to make them well—the blind, the lame, the deaf, the lepers, and the men who seemed to be possessed by devils.

Allowing for exaggerations in the stories, and I am sure exaggerations must be allowed for as they crept in almost unnoticed with every enthusiastic retelling of the story, we must say that whatever power it takes to rearrange the various parts of a man's mind and body so that he can function fully and freely, Jesus had it. He was not the only one who had it, mind you. People had it before him, and people have had it since; but he had it to an intense and extraordinary degree, and used it in a unique way, for a unique purpose.

Also, allowing for the fact that his primary purpose in life was not to make people well, but to make them good, nevertheless, the first experience that people had of Jesus' power was when he touched their broken bodies and their tortured minds. In this age of advanced medicine and surgery we must not forget this. There is more to healing than pills, and surgical operations are not a sure cure for everything.

He had power, also, over nature. There was a storm at sea which endangered his life and that of his friends; he stopped it. There was a hungry crowd that followed him out into the country to listen to his words; he fed them.

He walked on the water; he changed water into wine; he raised the dead.

Again, allowing for exaggeration and extravagance, the inevitable enlargement of the original event, it is impossible to get away from the fact that in Jesus men saw someone in whom the higher order had power over the lower order. Just as a genius can take a violin made of wood and catgut, and exert the higher order of his spirit over that lower order of material reality so that it sings with unbelievable beauty, so Jesus had this same sort of power over nature. He was not at the mercy of the natural world, tossed about helplessly by its storms and caprices. It seemed to his friends and those closest to him that he was in a position of imperial command over it. In him the lower order of material reality was subject to the higher order of mind and spirit.

His words had power. When he spoke, people listened. They did not always understand and they did not always like what he said, but they listened. You wonder why, especially if you are accustomed to do a great deal of speaking and know the difficulty of holding people's attention. As far as we can tell from the accounts that have survived, there was nothing about his speaking that we could call eloquence, in the old-fashioned sense of oratorical eloquence. There was extreme care in the use of words, in the arrangement of words, but there was no rhetoric, no professional eloquence.

The secret, I am sure, is to be found in the fact that when he spoke, he spoke not from a book, but from his heart. He said harsh things—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He said tender things, some of the most tender things, I reckon, that have ever been said—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you." He made profound things plain; he put the truth in stories that people never forgot.

There was also power in his very presence. This is harder

to describe. You have to feel it, you have to sense it as you read the Gospel narratives. He had the power to draw people to him. As they were drawn to him, they were often afraid of him, according to the stories; not always, I think, because they thought he would hurt them, but because they might hurt him, and be unworthy of him.

I wish you could feel the power of his presence now. It is not something that anyone can tell you about; you have to feel it. Think, as you try to feel it, what it might have been like. A look was enough to reduce a blustering fisherman to tears; the silence of his presence was enough to throw a sophisticated Roman governor into confusion.

So, a person reading the Gospel for the first time would almost certainly get the impression that whoever Jesus was, and however accurate or inaccurate the stories about him might be, he was a man who had a strange and unprecedented power. Quietly he came into the world, almost completely unnoticed, with a power, quiet though it be, that could shake the earth.

There are three or four things to be observed about the power of Jesus, and the first is that the power did not come from himself. "I can of mine own self do nothing," he said, according to St. John's Gospel. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." In other words, whatever power he had came from God and he knew it. He took no credit for it, and would not accept the adulation of the people who treated him like a king.

This is true of all real power, is it not? It never comes *from* us; it always comes *through* us, and when we try to generate power by our own might, we are then most likely to be weak. It is only when we are able to open our lives so that they can be channels for a power greater than ourselves that we are ever likely to be strong. "Of mine own self I can do nothing." Jesus said it. You may learn to say it.

And he never used his power in his own behalf. Have

you ever stopped to think of that? He never used his power in his own behalf, not to change stones into bread when he was hungry, not to do sensational stunts to catch the attention of the crowd, not to bring down legions of angels to protect him when he was in danger. The temptation of every man is the temptation to use whatever power he has for himself, and to the degree to which he does so, he loses it.

Another thing to observe about the power of Jesus is that it was not the sort of power that enabled him to do anything he wanted to do. Sometimes we are confused about that. We say that because Jesus was God incarnate, he was omnipotent and could do anything and everything he wanted to do. He could not. Neither can God, for that matter. Jesus wanted to heal everyone, but he didn't; he couldn't—not without their response. He wanted to make everybody good, to clean them inside and out, but he didn't; he couldn't. He wanted to give everyone that indispensable thing called faith, the courage to grasp life even when you can't see in the dark what you are grasping, but he didn't; he couldn't. He wanted, at least for a brief moment, at the end of his life, to avoid death himself, but he didn't; he couldn't.

Why? Because his power was always under the control of his love. He loved people too much to force them into the Kingdom. He opened the doors, he showed them the way, but unless they were willing to respond to what he said and to what he showed them, they remained outside. He would not force them. He would not violate their integrity as persons. And he loved God too much to usurp his sovereignty and, though he wanted to avoid death at his early age, when he saw clearly that it was the will of God that the cup could pass from him only if he drank it, he drained it to the dregs.

Power, mark you, whenever it escapes the control of love, whether it is the power of a parent over his child, an

employer over his employee, or a dictator over the people of his country, that power always brings death and destruction. Always! An autocrat is undesirable even at the breakfast table. At the conference table he is a menace.

There are two kinds of power; one is the power that drives, and the other is the power that draws. One is the power of a cannon that drives its shot on its way to destruction; the other is the power of the sunrise that draws men to itself. Jesus had both kinds of power. He used the first only occasionally, and with great restraint. He counted on the second, and by it has been drawing people to himself ever since.

In the long run, his real power was not in his success, but in his suffering; not in his strength, but in his weakness. You have heard that said so many times in church that you take it as a matter of course, but it contradicts everything that you and I naturally think and do in the normal course of our lives in this twentieth century. Most of us, except when we stop to think of it, do not really believe it. We do not believe that there is power in suffering; we shun it as we shun the devil. We do not believe there is power in weakness; we do everything we can to avoid it, and we are filled with shame when we cannot.

Paul speaks eloquently of the power of Jesus' resurrection, and certainly no one would deny the reality of that power. But his real power over men is the power that comes from his Cross, isn't it? Was not John instinctively right when he included these words in his Gospel, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself." It was the way he handled and dealt with his suffering that drew men to him. This is the ultimate secret of his power over the consciences of men and women through the ages. There is no question about it. The Resurrection is the seal of this power and the sign of its victory.

It is not the power of his healing, or of his words, or of his mastery over nature, not even of his presence. It is the

power of his love revealed in his suffering; this is the real power of Jesus.

This is a new kind of power. New then, and still new. This is the power of God. Any other kind of power corrupts. This power creates.

Let us be still, and remember Jesus as he was then, powerful to heal, to speak, to save. Think of him as he is now, powerful as the Spirit of God among us, to lift us up out of the low places and set our feet once again on the high way. O God, draw us to him who is the perfect incarnation of thyself, that our power may more and more be tamed by the power of his love. Amen.

The Great Surprise

Three women were on the way to the cemetery where Jesus had been buried less than two days before. They were not taking flowers to decorate his grave as people do now; they were taking spices to anoint his body. It was Sunday, early in the morning, the sun was just coming up. All the way there they had only one thing on their mind, and that was the *stone*. The tomb in which Jesus had been laid was more like a cave in the rock than a formally built mausoleum, and over it was rolled a stone to seal it and protect it against intruders. They knew that the stone was an enormous one and that all three of them together could not budge it if they had to, so all the way they kept wondering to themselves, Who will move the stone for us? And if nobody is there to move it, what will we do? How will we get into the sepulcher? And the more they thought about it, the larger the stone became in their imagination.

When they got there the stone had already been moved! Nine out of every ten difficulties that we anticipate from a distance disappear when we get there; or if they do not completely disappear, they either shrink in size or we grow in stature, so that they are manageable. An ordeal is ahead of you. You see it clearly; perhaps a month from now, six months, or a year from now it will meet you, and as you see it, you dread it. You know that it will not be easy and you imagine all the things that might happen as you come face to face with it. It may be an ordeal with a surgeon,

or a dentist, with a person you feel obliged to discharge, or with a job in which important changes are to be made. How will I ever do it? you ask. Who will pay the bills? Then, as you approach it, some of the difficulties which you have anticipated melt like wax, and, somehow or other, you find the means to get over the ones that still remain. It is not easy, to be sure, but not nearly so difficult when you get there as it appeared from a distance.

You think of the inevitable separation from a person with whom you have been knit together in constant affection for years, and you picture to yourself all the wrenching changes that the separation implies, and you say to yourself, How can I ever face it? How can I manage without the one whom I have counted on for so many years? The stone gets larger and larger as you think about it. When you get there, it is not easy. God seldom makes things easy for us. And yet some of the things that you anticipated are not there at all, and other things, when you begin to mount them, seem much less steep than they did from a distance.

There are so many things in our future that we face with dread—old age, retirement, death, insecurity, failing health—they are like great stones, and we keep asking ourselves as we move along in life, Who will roll the stone away? I can't move it, and if there isn't anybody there to move it for me, how can I go on? Yet how many times when we get there we find that the stone has already been moved! This is the first surprise in the Easter story.

When the women went inside the tomb, to their amazement the body of Jesus was not there. They knew that it had been placed there, lovingly, tenderly, at the invitation of Joseph of Arimathaea. They had seen it with their own eyes, but it was not there now. You can see why they were frightened and upset. Instead of a corpse, they saw a young man very much alive, dressed in white from head to foot, and he said to them, Don't be frightened! There

is nothing to be frightened about. I know you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen. He isn't here. See the place where they laid him. Of course, the fact was that they *did* see the place where they laid him. It was completely empty and bare! That was what so appalled them.

Things do not always work out the way we expect them to. We do not always find things in exactly the same place where we left them. You leave a man in his room. He has been there for ten years as an invalid, not able to move or help himself; you leave him there and think that he will be there six months hence when you go to see him again. And when you go again you find that he is not there. He is up, and out, and well!

You leave a man standing on the ground where he belongs. Men were made to walk, not to fly like birds. If you had lived in the nineteenth century, you would never have thought that it would be common for a man to do anything else but walk, or sail, or ride. So you leave him there, and then you go back a few months later and, to your amazement, the man that you left safely grounded is in the air, flying, like a bird, with wings! You leave a fire that has burned itself out. There is nothing but ashes and a few dying embers. Nothing can ever come of it; to all intents and purposes it is out. Someone comes along and either deliberately or accidentally gives it a little poke with his foot, just enough to let the air in, and the dying embers begin to burn and when you go back a few hours later the whole forest is ablaze!

There are patterns, to be sure, in life, thank God for that, but they are not quite so inflexible as we sometimes think they are. Nature runs quite regularly by law and we can be thankful that it does, else we would not know where we were; but once in a while, nature skips a step or two! Things you thought dead and buried are often up and about, and alive. This is the second surprise in the Easter story.

The young man whom the women met in the tomb told them that Jesus had risen. I doubt if they even heard what he said. You do not hear very much that you are not prepared to hear, and they were not prepared to hear that. If the man had said that the body of Jesus had been stolen they would have heard that because they would have been prepared to hear it. They could imagine that; they would know from past experience that somebody might steal the body of Jesus, and then say that the Christians had made up the story so they could say that he had been raised from the dead. But they were not prepared to take in the fact that he had risen. It was too much for them.

But it ought not to be too much for anyone who watched him with any care at all on the preceding Friday. As we watched and followed the events of that day they seemed from one point of view to move on with a kind of inexorable finality and doom that might finally grind him entirely out of the picture. But as we watched them, we certainly did not have the feeling that as they progressed Jesus was slowly sinking, like a ship whose hull had been ripped open and was doomed to the bottom of the sea. We did not have that feeling at all. We had the feeling that he was rising like a star in the sky!

Cruelty battered away at him from every side, mental cruelty as well as physical cruelty. He rose above it. He was not cruel. He was not even bitter; and when he prayed, he asked God to forgive the people who had been cruel to him. Loneliness humiliated him, left him high and dry, a stark figure against the sky, as his followers, one after another, deserted him and left the scene. He rose above it. He made a new friend in the thief beside him. Pain gripped him as he died of exposure and exhaustion. He rose above it. He scarcely mentioned it. He drowned it in a sea of larger concerns; he was so preoccupied with other people, with the soldiers, with the thief, and with his mother and his friend, that he did not have time to think of his own pain.

Darkness descended upon him, engulfed him, not only outer darkness but that inner darkness in which a man wonders whether life has any meaning at all or not. He faltered for a moment, but he rose above the darkness, and prayed, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Death finally claimed his body, as it will every human body. You can picture it as it was taken down, limp and lifeless, from the cross. He was entirely in the power of death. He did not resist it when it came, for his work was done.

Is it any wonder that he rose above death as he had risen above cruelty, and loneliness, and pain, and darkness? These are the things that kill a person inside, and these are the things that he had risen above. Is it any wonder then that he rose above death so that death had absolutely no dominion over him, none whatever?

I am sure that there is a great deal more to be said about the resurrection of Jesus, more than you or I will ever be able to say, let alone think, more about the Godward aspect of his rising. Let me say this to you by way of personal advice. If you find it difficult, with your modern, twentieth-century mind—not that it is any better than any other mind, but it is a mind characterized by a particular way of thinking—if you find it difficult to think of Jesus as rising *from* death, think of him as rising *above* death into another dimension of life where death is lost, as we eventually lose the clouds as we climb higher and higher toward the sun. He went through death from start to finish, but he rose above it.

The women, of course, had no way of knowing this. They were too close to it. The young man who met them at the tomb startled them, I suppose, by saying, "Don't stay here! There is no reason to stay, and this is no place to stand around and mourn and grieve. Go and tell the others what has happened, and then go back home, and you will see him there." They were so excited, and so unstrung, by everything that had happened, that they did

not do it at once, and you can easily see why. But gradually they gathered themselves together and told the others and went back home. And they did see him! Do not ask what they saw. If they were here now in person they could not tell you exactly in so many words what they saw. But what they saw was real, as real as flesh and blood; in a sense it was more real, more alive, than anyone they had ever seen. What they saw was all they needed to convince them that Jesus had risen above death. This is the third and great surprise in the Easter story.

But there is still another. It did not come immediately; at least they were not aware of it immediately. It takes even longer to take this one in than it does the previous one, but when it came I suspect it was the greatest and most powerful of all. This was it: *they could rise with him.* That is, if they died with him, they could rise to the kind of new life that he had risen to. If they were willing to die to their own lust for revenge, their desire to get back at somebody who had done something to them that they didn't like, and to forgive that person, they could rise above cruelty. And they did! If they were willing to die to their own thirst for popular approval, and were willing to be alone, and to stand for things in lonely places, they could rise like him above loneliness. And they did! If they could die to their own fear of the dark, and this I imagine was the hardest of all—it would be for me, and I do not mean the darkness of the night, but the darkness of the mind and soul, the darkness of mystery and the uncertainty of what life is all about—if they could die to that kind of fear, they too could rise above the dark. And they did! And they believed that if they were willing to take death without fear or dread, they would rise above that too.

If they could rise with him, so can you. That is, if you want to, if you want to enough to say with Henry Vaughan,

Grant that I may not like puddle lie
In a corrupt security,
Where, if a traveller water crave,
He finds it dead, and in a grave.

It is not easy. I am tempted to be the indulgent parent who tells his children that they can have it on easier terms. But I dare not tell you that because it is not true, and I would not want to do that because it would not be worthy of you. I know too many who have already done it, who in small and great ways have been through the darkness and have risen with him into the light. I know too many who have already done it to suggest that you can do it in any less costly way. The cost, however, by no means depreciates the value of the Easter surprise. In fact, it increases it. Did you ever know anything really great that was at the same time cheap? Free, perhaps, but not cheap.

The Easter surprise always startles us no matter how old we are, or how many times we have heard it before. It says that the way down is often the way up, and that the way to death is really the way to life. Or, taking us back to Friday again, and as Thomas à Kempis put it, "If thou bear the cross cheerfully, it will bear thee."

That is the resurrection, the Easter surprise. That is the New Life after it has gone through the valley of the shadow of death.

We thank thee, O God, for the life and death of Jesus, his presence with us now; help us to see him more clearly, to love him more dearly and to follow him more nearly, that his risen life may be in us; and as we die to the little things of the world, may we live with him in light and love and life. Amen.

PART III

The New Life and the World of Today

The Story of Two Giants

One of the most unforgettable stories in the Old Testament is the story of David and Goliath. Almost everyone has either heard it or read it. Goliath, so the ancient story goes, was a giant almost ten feet tall. The bronze armor alone, in which his body was completely sheathed, weighed something like two hundred pounds. He was a Philistine, and the Philistines were a small but mighty people, well-trained in war, and at the time of the story they were at war with the people of Israel. The two armies were encamped on two hills facing each other; and there was a valley between them. Every morning and evening Goliath, in a voice like thunder that sent fear and dismay through the camp of the Israelites, challenged them to settle the issue by single combat. Send one man to fight him, he cried. If their man won, the Philistines would be their slaves; but if he won, they would be slaves to the Philistines. No one accepted the challenge. They were too frightened to do anything.

David was hardly more than a boy, too young to go off and join the army with his older brothers. He remained at home with his father to take care of the flocks. Army rations, then as now, were not luxurious and the father of the sons asked David to take some food to the older boys in camp. When David arrived in the camp, he heard the challenge of Goliath. He saw the confusion and dread that prevailed among the men; he saw that they were help-

less against the giant, and that no one dared answer the challenge. He had the audacity to ask what would be given to the man who did answer it. He was not popular with his older brothers to begin with and, when he ventured to intrude himself into the situation, they spoke to him in a tone of disgust, suggesting that he keep still until he was spoken to.

David, however, was dauntless and went to the king. "I will go and fight the Philistine," he said. The king looked at him in utter amazement and said, "You're only a boy. You haven't had any experience in this sort of thing, and Goliath is a veteran. You haven't a chance in a contest with him." Then with that naïve courage that is, perhaps, the fruit of innocence and youth, David looked at him and said, "I have killed a lion and a bear. I had to do that when I was taking care of my father's sheep; and if I can do that, I can do this."

Saul saw that it was idle to protest, and said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." But before he went, Saul insisted on putting on him his own royal armor. David let him put it on piece by piece. When he was completely clothed in it, he turned to the king and said, "I cannot go with these: for I have not proved them." He was ill at ease in armor to which he was unaccustomed, and he had the sense to know that he could not fight as long as he was clad in such unfamiliar and unwieldy apparel. Then, the story goes in the King James version, too beautiful to paraphrase, "And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine."

Thus lightly clad and with virtually no weapons, he went out to meet Goliath. When Goliath saw him, a youth, clad in a shepherd's garments and with nothing but a staff and a sling in his hand, he despised him and cried, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?"

David's reply will not soon be forgotten. This is what he said: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Then David, lithe, nimble, free to move, slung a stone. It hit Goliath in the forehead and stunned him; he fell to the ground and David went and killed him. The last line of the story reads, "And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead they fled."

That is the story—primitive, crude, bloody, dramatic, stirring, a mingling of legend and history. The wonder of it is that across the years it speaks to us today.

The first thing that it says to us is that there are always men like Goliath in the world, giants who threaten the peace of the world, men who by their mere massiveness hold the world in the grip of fear. Even without stopping to think much about it, you can make quite a list of such men, beginning three centuries before Christ with Alexander; then, just on the threshold of the Christian era, Caesar; in the fifth century, Attila the Hun, who devastated the whole of western Europe; in the thirteenth century, from the east, came Genghis Khan; in the next century, his descendant, Tamerlane; in the nineteenth century, Napoleon; and in the twentieth century, Hitler—men who for one reason or another rose above the heads and shoulders of their fellows and gathered to themselves the collective power of their people and were therefore able to shake the world until it cringed before them.

There have always been giants like Goliath, and there are now. We need not name them. But we must remember that these destructive giants have never come to a good end. Some have collapsed because of their own weight. Power corrupts, and excessive power corrupts excessively, and men like Alexander fell because of that corruption. Some eventually have met their match. Hitler met his

when another giant across the channel quite unexpectedly appeared and outmatched his strength. Others have encountered someone quite different, someone who outwitted them, someone like David. A person has appeared on the scene who represented a new strain in the course of history before which they bowed and ultimately fell.

We do not know why there are giants continually disturbing the peace of the world. Historians, philosophers and sociologists can speculate to their hearts' content. They can tell us that as long as men and women thirst for power there will be these giants in the world, but we still do not know why it should be so. All we know is that it is so, and to remember it now gives us a perspective that we greatly need. It reminds us that we are not unique. We are in a position in which men and women have lived since the beginning of human history.

The second thing the story says is that in the great conflicts all the good is not on one side, or all the evil. It is divided, unevenly perhaps, but divided, nevertheless. Even in this case in which it would be so easy to idealize the hero, when you look at the two men carefully and objectively you see that all the good is not on one side. The struggle is not between a sheer brute and an innocent, idealistic youth. Both men could be cruel; both were cruel. Both would kill, and one did kill. And if Goliath was a barbarian, David was a prima donna with all the weaknesses that go with that temperament. And the same thing was true of the people they represented. To the settled Philistines, living on the rich maritime plain at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, the Israelites, only recently come from the desert, must have looked like interlopers, claiming lands that they had no right to, forcing out of the hills other people who had been there years before them. To the Israelites, the Philistines looked like the enemy of their God, the one great obstacle in their way toward their destiny.

Let us put this down in black and white. In the great issues of life it seldom happens that all the good is on one side and all the evil on the other. The good is almost always tinctured with evil, and the evil is seldom, if ever, entirely devoid of potential good. Remember that. Remember that it seldom happens that all the good is on one side and all the evil on the other. The world is not a study in black and white, any more than you are. It often happens, however, that there is so much more evil on one side than on the other that a man must take sides against it, but he takes that side knowing that the side he takes is neither perfect nor guiltless, and willing and ready to see any sign of goodness in the other side.

In my opinion, there is nothing that would do more to strengthen the spirit of America than for mature Americans to be able to say, America has not always been right, is not always right now, but we believe that it is on the right track, and that in the issue we face, it represents the greater good, and therefore we gladly take our stand on its side. The more we love it, the more critical of it we must necessarily be.

The third and, I think, the most significant thing that the story has to say to us is that David was a giant too, but a very different kind of giant. Goliath was a giant in the traditional sense. He was a giant in size and weight. David was a new kind of giant, a giant in intelligence and spirit. His strength was in his faith and not in his fists. He was not above the use of force—mark that—he was too smart for that. In the world he lived in he knew that he could not meet force without any reference to force at all. But it was not force that he counted on, that is the thing to remember. Nor was it physical strength that made him victorious over his opponent. It was that other thing, that intangible thing, that combination of wit and will that is hard to define. The old weapons, he realized, might be all right for Goliath but not for him. He won

the contest not by his physical prowess but by what you might call, even though it seem a rather sophisticated phrase to use about David at this point, his spiritual power.

The thing that haunts me now, and the reason why I have gone back to this old story, is this: it seems to me that we Americans are trying to wear the armor of our opponent. We are being tempted from every side to match our might against his, pound for pound, bomb for bomb, and so out-maneuver him at his own game. The great incentive that is constantly held out to us is that we beat the Russians to it. Competition is a good and legitimate thing in life, but none of the really great things in life have ever been accomplished by people who were doing it from the sheer ambition to get there first.

I feel sure of two things. First, that the day of the old weapons is over and gone. They will not disappear at once, and I am not so unrealistic as to think that we can disregard them altogether, but to put our trust in them seems to me idiotic. Gunpowder made bows and arrows obsolete; aircraft made trench warfare obsolete; guided missiles have made the old aircraft obsolete. Nuclear energy has made all explosive weapons obsolete, for the simple reason that they are too effective to be practical.

Even if it were not so, it is more and more evident to me that the great contests in life are ultimately won by those with the greatest intelligence and faith. We are told over and over again by loyal Americans whose good intentions no one can question that we are lagging behind the Russians in the arms race. That does not worry me half so much as the fear that we are lagging behind ourselves in intelligence and faith.

Intelligence. We are letting ourselves be told that we can win by bombs and bases, so we are making more and more of them to the neglect of other things which alone can make us strong. We ought to know better than that.

Faith. I am perfectly aware of the danger that we see in a man who rashly identifies his will with the will of God. Kipling once said in a rather amusing vein that there was only one thing more terrible in battle than a regiment of desperadoes, and that was a company of Scottish Presbyterians who rise from their knees and go into action convinced that they are about to do the will of God. I hope the Lord will spare us from that. By faith I mean now the things you put your trust in, the things you reach for, the things that shape your character, or more precisely, your loyalty to those things.

It is essential to be specific at this point, but in an issue as large as this it is difficult to put your finger on the specific things which should concern the individual. But what do you think Americans put their trust in now? What are they reaching for, in general? It seems to me—and I realize that this does not apply to everybody, there are scores of exceptions—that they are putting their trust in security, speed, leisure, money, amusement, happiness—which usually means comfort. Do you think that is fair? Do you think it is true of Americans in general and, if it is, do you think it is good protection against the enemy?

How much do Americans care about the discipline of the mind, for example? One of our college presidents has pointed out sadly that only three out of every ten college graduates now major in anything that could be called a fundamental discipline, either in the liberal arts or in the sciences. The rest of them take courses geared for modern Americans, whatever they may be.

Again, how strongly do Americans feel that they have a destiny in the world and that that destiny is not merely to live more comfortably but more completely and usefully? There was a young man in the music school for Americans in Fontainebleau, a recent graduate of one of our great universities, who had real gifts and he had come to the school to develop them. This involved dis-

cipline and hard work. After several weeks I missed him, and when I asked someone where he was, I was told that he had gone to the Riviera for a few days and would be back soon. But he never came back. I dare not say why, but I suspect that life on the Riviera had more charms for him than the disciplined life of the school. This is too typical of too many Americans, and it makes for weakness, not strength.

How many Americans believe that peace is more important than prosperity? You say that everyone believes that; we are a peace-loving people. Don't believe it. In an investment brochure that was sent to me I read the startling statement that one reason, according to the writer, for the sudden drop in the market from the end of July to the middle of August was the supposed "peace scare" arising out of Mr. Krushchev's proposed visit to the United States. The writer then went on to reassure his clients that the visit would not lessen the cold war tension but rather increase it, and that the defense industries, therefore, would have to be kept going not only as they are but at an even higher pitch, and investors could be sure that their dividends would increase and not decrease. This is not the kind of armor that is going to be victorious over any of the giants that we face today. In this sort of armor David would have been beaten before he started.

America is a giant in the world today; there is no question about that. The question is, What kind of giant shall we be? Shall we be the old-fashioned, traditional giant, putting all our trust in our weight, our size, and our money? Or, shall we be a new kind of giant who realizes that as history moves on, new strains develop and that in the long run the victor is always the one who has the intelligence and the faith?

I say *we* in my question because you must not forget this. No great conflict can ever be settled by single combat. David could not do it for the Israelites; they had the

issue to work out with the Philistines years after his victory over Goliath. Neither can the President or Secretary of State do it for us. In the long run, a leader, like water, can rise no higher than his source, and the source in this case is you!

That is why I put the question the way I did. What kind of giant will we be? What kind of giant will you be? We may spend the rest of our lives answering that question.

O God, we look to thee for guidance as we move through the troubled ways of life; save us from narrowness of mind, from imprisonment in old ways that have long since been outworn, and give us the courage to stand for things that are right and true, no matter what happens to us in the end. Amen.

A Warning for These Days

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." That is one of those swift, direct statements of fact that Jesus was continually making which, like a shaft of light, pushed back the dark.

To turn the phrase into more contemporary English, a man's real life does not depend on the things he possesses —things like his house and its furnishings, his automobile, his money, his clothes, his hi-fi, his TV and radio sets, his pictures and books, his fishing tackle and hunting equipment, his silver and personal treasures. These things are not his life. His real life consists of, and depends on, things like the quality of his human relationships, the power and validity of his ideas and ideals, the richness of his mind, and the responsiveness of his spirit. These and many other things like them are his real life.

A man can have all the things that money can buy and still be both miserable and mean. A man's life does not increase in depth or intensity, in happiness, usefulness, or creativeness, in direct proportion to his possessions. In fact, on many occasions it diminishes as his possessions increase. It is not the things that a man *has* that make his life; it is the person he *is* inside.

That is the gist of what Jesus was saying, and my guess is that you agree with him. Some of the things he said are hard to understand and you may have secret, if not open, reservations about them. "He that loveth his father or

mother more than me is not worthy of me"—that is hard for an American parent to take; and, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"—that is not easy for a prosperous business man to understand. But this statement of his about what a man's life really consists of is clear sailing, self-evident. Most people who read this book will agree that things are only incidental to a man's life.

However, before we settle down in our agreement, perhaps it would be well if we looked at the situation to which Jesus addressed this remark. You can always assume when you read anything that Jesus said that he did not say it in a vacuum. He always said it in the context of a human situation. Because of the many years that separate us from him, we do not always know exactly what the context was, but we know that whatever he said, he said to someone about something specific. He always spoke to a person, or a group of persons, in a particular situation and in this case we know exactly who the person was and what the situation was.

We do not know the man's name; he is described as a man out of the crowd, who went to Jesus with a complaint. It was one of the complaints that people constantly make, wherever they live and at whatever time. His complaint was about his father's will. (It is sad but true that more families in these years of enlightenment have been split in two by disagreement over wills than by almost anything else you can think of.) Apparently, the father had left everything to the brother, or at least more than the man thought he should have, and he went to Jesus and asked him to persuade his brother to share the inheritance with him.

Perhaps you remember that Jesus said to the man, That is not my business. It is not necessary to imply that Jesus was saying, It is not anybody's business. He was shrewd enough about life and about human nature to know that

it had to be somebody's business to help settle the various disputes that occur on the troubled waters of life. But Jesus said, That is not my business. My business has to do with greater things than that, things that are deeper, things that are more profound and ultimately more essential than that. I am here, said Jesus, to warn you, and my warning is this: Beware of covetousness!

Covetousness is one of those overstuffed words in the religious vocabulary that has lost its edge, yet everybody knows what it means. *Covetousness is desire when it gets out of hand.* Covetousness is desire when it drives you to want things that belong to other people, or to want things that will do you more harm than good if you get them. Covetousness is that desire that drives you to want things so desperately that you will do almost anything to get them. Covetousness is inordinate self-seeking. It is desire that has deteriorated into greed.

What Jesus was saying to the man was this: Watch out for desire when it gets out of hand. It can ruin you. It can destroy your relationship with your brother; it probably already has. (And many a family can testify that it has destroyed their family relationships in one way or another.) It can do worse than that. It can shrink your soul gradually until there is nothing left of it. What Jesus was saying to the man, if it is fair to read between the lines, was: Your real problem is not how much or how little you happen to inherit from your father. This *is* a problem, and naturally you are interested in it, and quite understandably you are concerned about the fairness and the justice of it, but this is not your real problem. Your real problem is what you are in yourself, what you really want in life, what you are aiming at in life. Your real problem is where your desires are set, and where they find their satisfaction. If you are clear on this basic issue, the disputes nearer the surface of your life will largely take care of themselves.

"Take heed," said Jesus, "and beware of covetousness: because a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." It was the revelation of a truth aimed at one particular man who was in danger of being drowned in his desires, and the revelation took the shape of a warning: Take heed and beware!

The warning that Jesus gave to the man without a name, two thousand years ago, never had greater urgency than it has at this moment in this country, and I should like to sound that warning now as loudly as I can.

It must be prefaced by making one thing clear, namely, that things are important in a man's life. It is important that a man has a decent house in which to live and bring up his family. It is important that a man has enough money to live on so that his family can be protected from the terrible ravages of extreme poverty. It is important that a man has things like parks and playgrounds, hospitals and medical care, to keep his body fit, and it is important, also, that he has things like books and pictures and music to enrich and enlarge his mind. In this country we have made more of these things available to more people than at any other time and in any other country in the world. We are proud of that, and we ought to be.

The danger is that the more things we have the more we want, and the more we want the less we are aware of how we get them, the more corners we cut in our eagerness to get them, and the more thick-skinned we become to the needs and desires of other people. The charge that I am making, quite humbly because I realize that I am involved in this as much as anyone else, is that we in this country are becoming a covetous people. Some might be more blunt and say that we have already become a covetous people.

If there was any question about that charge it should have been answered by the Congressional hearings which, in the fall of 1959, probed the practices of television pro-

ducers. One hesitates to say anything about them for what was revealed was so shattering that one hardly dares to speak about it at all. One young man was drawn into the center of attention. Speaking for myself, I can say that my heart ached for him. Yet no matter how many allowances you made, no matter how much you tried to understand why he did what he did, and no matter how ready you were to help him pick up the pieces of his life and make the most of it, you must say that what he did was wrong. You must also be prepared to accept the fact that he will suffer the consequences of what he did. Not, I hope, the consequences of vindictive punishment—heaven forbid that any of us should be guilty of that—but the consequences of the inevitability of the moral order of God under which we live.

At this point, I must insert a parenthesis. There is in our country today a terrible confusion in our thinking, a confusion in the relationship between love and judgment. We think that if we love a person we must never say anything unpleasant to him, never make any judgment upon him. That is why some children are growing up without any moorings. It is because their parents, thinking that they love them and wanting to love them, never dare to criticize them. In the name of love, they let them make mistakes without telling them that they are making them. The deeper love is, the more clearly it sees the faults of those whom it loves, and the more longingly it yearns to deliver the person from those faults. So much for the parenthesis.

The real tragedy of the Congressional hearings lies in the fact that what happened to one man revealed the shocking state of decay that is just underneath the shining surface of American prosperity. Some people knew that it was there all along. People with any perception at all could see the cracks in the surface but, tragically enough, it often

takes some single event like that one to stir the conscience and awaken the imagination of the people at large.

I do not want to exaggerate the situation, but it seems to me that that single event revealed a situation which includes just about all of us. Certainly, in the immediate picture, it included first of all the sponsors who, while they were perhaps not directly responsible for what happened, were nevertheless so preoccupied with the fortunes of their product that they did not take the trouble to investigate what was going on in the promotion of it. Certainly it included the advertisers, not only those involved in this particular situation, but the advertising people of the whole country, people who are engaged in a perfectly legitimate undertaking, to make known to the people the things that exist to meet their needs, and yet who are continually tempted to make one product and break another equally good one, not because they believe in it, not because it is better, but because they have the wits to devise a gimmick that will make people buy it even though they neither want nor need it. This kind of subtle deception has crept, like a paralysis, further toward the heart of our system than we realized. It is now as plain as the nose on your face.

Certainly the producers were involved in it, not only the producers of this program, but the producers of all programs of mass entertainment. Granted that they did not know what was going on, they should have known. They should have cared enough about their responsibility to the public to find out what was going on. The directors of the networks were involved in it, and I was glad that the president of one of the networks was the first to admit it.

Surely the public was involved in it. The public has looked at television for so long and taken part in one kind of passive entertainment or another for so many hours, that it has lost what power of discrimination it may

once have had. It is willing to watch anything that entertains it, free of charge, and is willing to be taken in, if need be, for a good show.

Even those of us who never watch television were involved, and this includes people like myself. It seemed to me as though I saw the whole panorama of our society split wide by this relatively unimportant event. The weakest side of our society was laid bare by it. Our thirst for publicity—we all like it and we are tempted to do almost anything to get it. Our craving for things that will give us status, all sorts of things, whether they are worth having or not. Our continual indulgence in passive entertainment, instead of doing something ourselves that will give us real joy. And above all, our lack of self-discipline. A wise and witty commentator on the state of American education came forth with the statement not long ago that the spirit of American education is summarized in the statement: *If at first you don't succeed, try something else.*

What I am saying is that, not deliberately perhaps, but nevertheless definitely, we have created a climate in this country in which the soul can barely breathe. The whole country is parched by it. One of the dependable commentators in the daily paper, writing about this tragic revelation, pointed out that there are certain members of Congress—not all, he was very quick to say—who have a record of voting always the way their campaign contributors would have them vote. You can go on right down the line. It is like the pins at the end of a bowling alley; if you hit the right one, they all go down. So one dreadful event has exposed a whole continent of decay.

Some people were primarily concerned, at least it seemed so to me, about what other countries would think of us because of this exposure. Naturally we like to be thought well of, especially by our enemies, and I care as much as anyone about what other countries think about us.

What I am primarily concerned about, however, is what *we* think about it. I am afraid that some people took it lightly, without seriousness. I said to a man in the secular world, a man I like and see often, that I felt bad about the particular individual who was so sensationally involved in the hearings. He replied, "Well, I'm just sorry that he got caught."

Some did take it seriously. Others did not dare to say anything about it because they were afraid that people would think they were unpatriotic if they did. Again, the confusion of love and judgment. A man who really loves his country is going to be more critical of it than a man who doesn't give a fig for it, and a man who loves this land of ours is going to see it with its faults glaring before his eyes in a way that the other man is not going to see it.

Some spoke out. George Kennan was one. In a speech in Washington, not about this particular situation, but about the general condition of the country, he said this. (Try to put out of your mind anything else that you may think about this particular man and put your mind on *this,* and ask yourself whether this is true or not.) "If you ask me," says George Kennan, "as a historian, let us say—whether a country in the state this country is in today, with no highly developed sense of national purpose, with the overwhelming accent of life on personal comfort and amusement, with a dearth of public services and a surfeit of privately sold gadgetry, with a chaotic transportation system, with an educational system where quality has been extensively sacrificed to quantity, and with insufficient social discipline even to keep its major industries functioning without grievous interruptions—if you ask me whether such a country has, over the long run, good chances of competing with a purposeful, serious and disciplined society such as that of the Soviet Union, I must say that the answer is 'no'."

I know that this country has great resources and that

there are men and women in it who are ready and willing to respond to any call that is made upon them in the name of moral righteousness. I know that. And I know that warnings by themselves alone are not enough. They must be followed by creative and constructive action. But I also know that fair warning of a storm can save the life of a man who is willing to heed it. The warning is this: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses."

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

Our prayer is a silent searching of our own hearts and minds and consciences. Help us, O God, to lay these things to heart and save us from the mistake of making judgments upon others which we refuse to make upon ourselves. Amen.

The Ambivalence of Palm Sunday

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem the Sunday before he died, no one knew he was coming. No one had invited him. Neither the Governor nor the High Priest was on hand to welcome him. The people had no time to prepare either themselves or the city for his arrival. Some of the pilgrims who were in town for the festival improvised a reception. They cut down branches from the trees to wave as he passed by, and some of them put their garments on the donkey that he rode and even spread them in the way as they would for a king. But the city as a whole was taken completely by surprise. Suddenly, unannounced, uninvited, he appeared. There he was!

Things often happen that way. You are lost, either literally or figuratively. Frantically, you try to find your way out. You try this door and that door, this person and that person, this doctor and that doctor, this religion and that religion, all to no avail. Suddenly, where you least expect it, when you are ready to give up, a door opens of its own accord. There is a way out. You are in the clear. You have been found.

Or, you are looking for a mate. As you crave food, you crave companionship, and not only the casual companionship of friends that come and go, but the lifelong companionship of a mate. You begin to look for the perfect person; you make dates, you go to parties, you join clubs. Suddenly, when you are not looking, when you are not

thinking about it, someone appears. Here is your mate. This is the one!

Life works in a strange, mysterious way, doesn't it? For on the one hand, it says to you: If you want me, you have to look for me, work for me, search for me, find me for yourself. But when it comes to the great things in life—at least, it seems so to me, and it is confirmed more and more in my experience—life says to you: Here I am! An opportunity drops in your lap, unbidden, unexpected; there it is! You did not seek it; it singled you out, so to speak. A book is left on a bedside table in a room where you are spending the night. You read it and, as you read, it is as though a new planet swims into your ken. A person walks across your path and changes the whole direction of your life. A vision flashes across your horizon and the entire world is different from that moment on.

That is the way it happened then. The people were looking for a king, a real king; a king with authority, with power, who could lead them out of the morass, both political and spiritual, in which they were caught. They looked everywhere. They searched the Scriptures for generations to see where he might be born, and when. They combed the ranks of the royal family, defunct though it was, to see if there might be someone there who would fill this role. Some, believing that this could be no earthly figure, scanned the sky for a heavenly being who would come to be their king. And when they couldn't find him, they prayed to God and asked him to send him to them.

Then, one day when they were not looking, when they were not thinking about it, in the streets of Jerusalem, on the steps of the Temple, there stood a king! He was nothing like any king they had ever seen or heard of before, or ever dreamed about; he had none of the things that they associated with royalty, but there was something kingly about him, nevertheless, and even the most insensitive of them were aware of it, and knew instinctively that he had

the right to rule. There he stood, without notice, without warning; young, plain, yet imperious. They had done nothing to bring him there, he simply had come.

He made no attempt to force himself upon them, no attempt whatever to take the city by storm. There was nothing that resembled in any way a *coup d'état,* nothing like the great conquerors of the past who rode into a city and took it by force. With Alexander, Napoleon, and Hitler, Jesus had absolutely nothing in common. Nothing! He was the king of a kingdom as different from theirs as day is from night. There he was, and they were absolutely free to accept him or to reject him.

That, too, is the way things happen. Life allows us an amazingly large margin of freedom, and the great things, when you stop to think about it, life seldom forces upon anyone. They are presented, but they do not have to be taken in. Bach made music, for instance; music such as no one had ever heard. People were free to listen to it or not to listen to it. Some listened to it, many did not. Consequently, it lay buried for a hundred years. In the next century, Abraham Lincoln made music of another kind, the music of words, eloquence such as no other American has ever equalled, words in which great ideas that went deep into the nature of truth and reality were expressed with such vividness and beauty that the words of no other American can be compared to them. Yet the people were not compelled to listen to him. They were free to listen or not, as they chose. Some chose not to listen. Thank God many did listen, and what they heard, they never forgot.

An opportunity may now stand at your door. You are absolutely free to open the door or to leave it closed. You can accept it, you can rise to its challenge, you can take the risks of it and plunge into the depths of it, or you can stay locked up in your little house, sealed in your private shell, all safe and sound by yourself. You have the freedom to do either.

Some things in life we have no choice about, but when it comes to the great things, we can take them or leave them. We can open the door or leave it closed. When Christ stands before you in any shape or form, in a beggar, in a neighbor, in an enemy, in a friend, in a lover, in a decision, in a choice, in a challenge, you are absolutely free to take him or leave him. There is no compulsion one way or the other.

The choice the people had to make about Jesus on that first Palm Sunday was not an easy one. Is it ever, do you think? On the one hand, there was something in them that responded to him, deeply, sincerely. He had done so much for them: he had opened the eyes of their blind; he had healed their sick; he had cured their mentally disturbed. He had unlocked the gate of heaven for so many of them and shown them things they had never dreamed of, stars they had never seen before. They knew that. There were so many things about him that appealed to them, things that answered some of the deepest needs of the human soul. They knew that, too. And in most cases, in their secret hearts, they knew that he spoke the truth as the truth had never before been so clearly and so unambiguously spoken.

But, if they accepted him, they would surely get in trouble with Rome. They were in trouble enough already; they had high taxes to pay and the armies of occupation were tramping through their country day and night. It was not easy to be under the heel of even so enlightened an empire as Rome. If they accepted this man as their real king, they would certainly get in even more trouble with Rome than they were in already. They would be guilty of treason. On the purely local scene, some of them would surely lose their jobs, especially if they worked in the Temple, and there were hundreds employed in the performance of the sacrificial cult. All of them would have to change their ways of life, some of them very radically. They were

the victims, you see, of what we have come now—thanks to the psychiatrists—to know as ambivalence, which is the co-existence of opposite and conflicting feelings about the same person or object. They wanted him, and they didn't want him. They were drawn to him, and they were repelled by him.

There were some people, of course, who were totally drawn and others totally repelled, but as a people, there was a real, deep-seated ambivalence, and their divided heart was never so vividly or so dramatically exposed as it was on Palm Sunday, when their first impulse was to accept him with open arms and to hail him as their king and deliverer; but when they stopped to think about it, they withdrew, they changed their tune. They began to rationalize along these lines: it is better that one man should die, even though he be the best man that ever lived, than that everybody should get into trouble. That is good rationalization, isn't it? It is good enough for the twentieth century. It makes sense. So they rejected him. They returned him like a manuscript to its author, with a rejection slip on which were three words: *Good, but dangerous!*

The point is, of course, that the same ambivalence is in all of us in one way or another, and this is why we come back again year after year to these mighty events; not because we are compelled to, but because we are drawn to them, because in the drama of this one Life the issues of every life are set forth. We find ourselves right in the middle of it (that is, if we have the eyes to see) and we find in ourselves the same conflict of feelings that the people had then. For us it is something like this: we accept something good in principle, but when it stands before us incarnate in a person, then we begin to wonder, we begin to count the cost, to add up all the "ifs, ands, and buts," to see the implications, to get frightened and, more than once, reject it.

To make this specific—and there is no point in saying it unless it is specific, is there?—you accept the principle of racial integration. I would be willing to guess that there are very few people in this part of the country who do not accept in principle the proposition that all men are created equal and that, no matter what their color or race may be, they should be treated alike, without discrimination. But you want to sell your house, and the first offer comes from a Negro. There the principle stands before you, incarnate in a person, and you begin to wonder; you add up all the factors in the situation; you begin to rationalize, and is it not altogether likely that you will end up by saying, It is better that one good family suffer than that this whole neighborhood be ruined? You might not say that, but the chances are that even the best of you would.

Again, you accept the principle of disarmament. I imagine that there are not many people who would not say that in principle they believe that the nations of the world should put down their arms, for their arms will ultimately destroy the world and all the human beings in it. Then someone presents a plan for disarmament; the plan has risks, and there are questions about it that you cannot answer. And when the principle becomes incarnate in a specific plan, then you begin to wonder, to get cold feet. You begin to think of the safety of the nation, and you rationalize, only you put it the other way around this time, in an even more horrible way. You say, It is better that the whole world blow up than that this one nation lose its security. (Not altogether logical, but emotionally satisfying.)

Or, you accept the principle of religious freedom, the right of every man and woman to worship according to his conscience; and you, in your tradition and culture, respect the religion of other people, and their beliefs. Then a man who belongs to a church that you fear is nominated for high office. The principle is then incarnate in a person

and demands action on your part, a decision, a vote; but you begin to tremble, and to ask questions, and to wonder whether it is right, and what would happen if so-and-so should be elected, whether perhaps it is not better for one person, or one church, to suffer than that the whole nation be exposed to danger.

We could go on like this indefinitely, but we will not. One more example of the ambivalence you are likely to find in yourself will be enough. You accept the principle of Christian marriage. There are not many people reading this book who do not accept the principle of Christian marriage, a man and a woman living together in lifelong union with each other, in order to fulfill the life of each partner of the union and to provide the maximum degree of security and happiness for their children. But when an unpleasant or difficult husband or wife faces you every morning at the breakfast table, when that principle becomes incarnate in a person, stares at you in a real situation, then you begin to change your mind, to back down, to rationalize. And you often come to the point where you reject the principle altogether.

This ambivalence that was so vividly dramatized on Palm Sunday many years ago, and that is so much a part of our lives as we live them now, is not, to my way of thinking, so much because we are bedeviled as it is because we are bewildered. Not many people go out deliberately to kill the Prince of Life, not many people deliberately set out to reject the good when it stands before them. They do it because they are caught in the trap of their own conflicts, their own desire for security, their fears and timidities, and when these begin to work against their ideals, their finest insights, their deepest longings, they are more than likely to give up. And the Prince of Glory pays the price, always. The best we have suffers the most. The highest we know is dragged down to the lowest to which we can sink.

I have never before felt so vividly what it meant when the prophet said, as though by anticipation, "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." I am not sure in exactly what sense we can say that the Lord deliberately did it, but I am sure that the iniquity which is the tragic result of our ambivalence inevitably falls on the innocent and good.

The Palm Sunday story ends here, but we cannot stop here, not quite. Jesus was finally rejected, but the rejection was not final. That is the amazing paradox, and the Gospel is a grand series of paradoxes, one after another. The manuscript that the publisher rejects often becomes the book that the whole world accepts. That is the paradox. And the very rejection may have something to do with the power that wins the final approval. That is the mystery.

Rembrandt was the most popular painter of his day until he was about thirty-five. He had the whole of Holland, virtually the whole of Europe, applauding him, clamoring for his work. He painted everybody of any distinction at all and could command any price he wished. Then, when he was about thirty-five, another painter came along—Van Dyke—more elegant than Rembrandt, easier for the general public to grasp and understand, and Rembrandt was rejected in favor of his more elegant successor. Then years before his death, he was forced to sell everything that he had, and he lived the last years of his life in poverty. "And yet," writes an art critic, "most of his finest painting belongs to those difficult years." He was finally rejected, but the rejection was not final. Somehow or other, you cannot help but feel that the rejection had something to do with the greatness that followed, that the rejection, as it were, pierced him and struck open a new vein so that the genius was greater than before.

This is not the time to spell out this side of the truth. We say only this: we are ambivalent creatures at best. We

see it so clearly on a day like this, when we look at ourselves in the mirror of Palm Sunday. We often reject those we love the most, and love and hate are so closely interwoven in our hearts that it is sometimes almost impossible to disentangle them. But God has a way of taking our rejections and turning them into life. "The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

Open our eyes, O God, that we may see thy marvelous works, how thou canst take even the evil that is in us and use it for thy good purposes; how Jesus could take the thorns of life and wear them as a crown. Give us the grace and courage to follow in his train. Amen.

Black and White

If you say that you put something down in black and white, you mean that you have made it as clear as you can possibly make it, and have removed from it any possible confusion. There it is on paper in pen and ink, absolutely clear, with no uncertainty about it at all. But if you begin to talk about black and white *people,* there is no clarity whatsoever, nothing but confusion, and around the subject gather clouds of either prejudice or sentimentality. The principle may be clear enough in your mind but when you begin to practice the principle, the confusion is worse confounded.

First of all, then, what is the principle? The principle, as it was once clearly stated, is that all men are created equal. What does that mean? It does not mean, surely, that all men are alike, because they are not. Everyone is different. It does not mean that all men are equally good or equally gifted, because they are not. Some are saints and some are devils, some are morons and some are geniuses. It means that all human beings are *human,* made by the same God, in his image, of the same essential stuff and raw material; that all are a strange mixture of body, mind and soul; that all are potentially devilish, and all are potentially divine. The way they handle these potentialities varies, of course, depending either on their opportunity or their character. It varies all the way from a person like Al Capone to Albert Einstein, a wide range between two ex-

tremes. How far and to what degree they develop their potential humanity varies from the primitive tribes of Australia and Africa to the society of educated men that make up the faculty of Harvard University.

It means that if all human beings are human, then all human beings must be treated as human. Not as more than human, mark you; not treated like gods, endowed with the right to lord it over their fellows, idolized, worshipped, and served by their fellow men. Nor as less than human, like animals, to be petted, perhaps, but always kept on a chain.

Some in the human family will naturally rise to high positions of leadership, not because they are black or white, or red or yellow, but because they are gifted human beings, and we have lived long enough and seen enough of the history of the human race to know that those gifts may be found in people of all colors. Some will remain at the level of mediocrity; most, in fact, will remain at that undistinguished level. Again, not because they are black or white, but because they are not unusually gifted human beings. And some, we know from experience, will fall below the level of mediocrity, often far below the tolerable level, and they, in the interests of the total welfare, will necessarily be cared for in their weakness, and restrained in their wickedness, not because they are black or white, but because they are retarded, reluctant human beings.

What it means, then, when we say that all men are created equal is that no human being is given the right by God to treat any other human being as less than human. They may treat him as stupid or ignorant, wayward or dangerous, sick or insane, pleasing or displeasing, but not as an animal, with no soul or imagination, no unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of his own happiness.

Where do you find this principle written down? You will not find it in the Bible and, if we could clarify that point, we would make some progress. You will not find it

spelled out in so many words in the Bible that all men are equal. It is implicit in the Bible, as the flower is implicit in the seed, though not yet visible, not yet in existence, only potentially existent. It is implicit in the idea that there is one God and that he has made all men in his image, and when the Jews first grasped that tremendous idea about God, they had the seed of the principle that we are talking about. But most of the time, with a few outstanding exceptions, they did not know it, nor did they make any pretense of practicing its full implications. They did not treat the Gentile as an equal, nor did the Gentile treat the Jew as an equal. There was a wall between them that separated them at their meals, in their families, and often in their business.

Even more implicit is this principle of equality in the Christian experience, for in that experience there is, among other things, the conviction that Christ died for all men, not only for the people of his own country, not only for the people who were living at the same time he lived, but the Son of Man, the God-man, died for all men in all ages, everywhere. Therefore, when St. Paul was writing his Letter to the Romans, the most shocking thing that he said in that letter (we read it now with so little excitement because we have read it so many times) was that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek! It was incredible that anyone should say that, especially a Jew. No difference? They didn't eat with each other, they didn't meet with each other, they didn't marry each other, and yet Paul was able to say that because Christ died for both the Jew and the Gentile, he was therefore lord of both, and that this common life that they both had in him wiped out the distinction between them.

Paul did not go much further than that. That was quite a step for one man to take. He did not go on from there and say that because all men are equal in Christ, slavery is therefore wrong. He apparently accepted it as a part of

the society of his day, and made no protest against it. He had taken one great step forward, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female: for all are one in Christ Jesus." That was a strategic step forward.

Where, then, do you find the principle written down? You find it, of course, in our Declaration of Independence. But most unmistakably it is written in the history of our time, on every page of every day's newspaper. If anyone takes seriously at all the historical experience of the last fifty years, one thing is extremely self-evident, and that is that there is and can be no master race, and whenever one race presumes to assume the supremacy over another race, there is nothing ahead but disaster for everyone concerned.

It is written supremely, less legibly but no less clearly, on our conscience. It is the conclusion to which the Christian conscience has slowly and laboriously come as a result of what happened in Palestine two thousand years ago. As I have already said, Paul himself did not see it in its fullness, and people at various times who have been leading lights in Christian thought have not seen it, but in the historic context of this our day, we can see it, and most of us do see it. For me, at any rate, the principle is as clear as day. I know it is not for everyone, not even for some sincere Christians, but for me as a Christian the principle is as plain as though it were written in light across the sky.

The principle is clear, but when I begin to apply it, I run into difficulties, and I imagine that you do, too. We might as well be as specific as we can and come right to the point. There is no use in focusing our attention on South Africa; we will do better to give our attention to our own country first, and to look at the issue as it presents itself to us here. The question in which we meet this principle face to face is this: Should we separate the black and the white races in the United States of America? That is the question. Should we send their children to separate schools,

make them as good as possible, of course, and with every advantage provided for them (which, incidentally, we have not done in the past) but keep them separate? Should we force them to attend separate churches, ride on separate busses and trains, or at least in separate parts of those vehicles, eat in separate restaurants, stay in separate hotels, live in separate parts of the city, trade in separate stores? Or, should we mix the two races, not try to separate them, treat them as though there were no basic difference between them, that though in their color they may be different, in their humanity they are the same?

What do you think? I wish I knew. Do you think at all about it? Or do you just feel strongly, one way or the other? If you do think, you are probably puzzled and torn by considerations that pull you in opposite directions. This is the case with me. On the one hand, you feel the power of the principle; it is as clear as daylight, and as inescapable. You cannot get away from it. On the other hand, you see the enormous difficulties that ensue when you try to apply it. So you begin to think; and you think, perhaps, along these lines.

For one thing, the two races have been separated for so long that the gulf between them is enormous—the cultural gulf, the educational gulf, the social gulf is tremendous. Naturally it would be. If you had an intimate friend and separated yourself from him, put the continent between you and him, and didn't see him for fifty years, you wouldn't expect to be on very intimate terms of understanding when you next met, or have much in common with him. And when you have two races separated for hundreds of years, never really given equal opportunity to mingle with each other, there is no reason to expect them to be on any intimate terms, or to be anything but shy and suspicious of each other. You recognize this, so you begin to think about it in terms of your children, and you say that in theory you agree that they should all go to the

same school. But then you think of your children going to a school into which are introduced great numbers of Negro children who have come from entirely different backgrounds, who have not had the same privileges and opportunities that your children have had. You don't know what to think, or what to do. You are torn between the principle and the application of it.

You go on and say to yourself that if you don't separate the two races, there is bound to be intermarriage. And, of course, there is bound to be intermarriage. You may not have any anthropological theories about it, but you may have seen the havoc that some intermarriages bring, the agony that some of the children go through when they don't know where they belong; the travail that their parents go through in trying to find a place in society where they will be accepted and able to live a normal life. And so you say to yourself, Granted these facts, isn't it better, perhaps, even though right in principle, to prevent intermarriage before it happens?

I sympathize with you in your bewilderment. If you lived in the South, your bewilderment would be even greater than it is here, because the issue there is more intense, more emotionally, as well as more economically, complicated. I am always grateful that I lived in Baltimore for five years. It is not the deep South, but it is on the edge of the South, and a Northerner begins to see there some of the issues involved in this great question which people who have lived all their lives in the North are not likely to know or feel. So I sympathize with anyone who has these questions in his mind, and I am not presuming, now or ever, to make any dogmatic statement as to what any individual should do at any particular time, or in any given situation, by way of applying this principle.

But let me ask you this question. If you happened to be living in a country that was predominately colored, like India, how would you feel if you were automatically excluded from all the first-class activities of the society of

that country? You want your children to go to the best schools, and they are not accepted because they are white. You yourself want to go to the church of your choice, and you are not allowed to because you are white. You want to join a club, and you are not welcome because you are not the right color. How would you feel? You say, or you are likely to say, But that's different! Why is it different? Because I am white! It isn't different; it is only that you are on the other end of the line. You are on the short end instead of the long end, but there isn't any real difference in the issue.

Or, you may say that, by and large, it is really better the way it is. It is better for them, it is better for everybody in the long run; it may not be right, but it is the best we can do with a bad situation; it protects them from a great many things that would make life difficult, and it is better that we go along the way we are, not for our sakes only, but for theirs as well.

Whenever I hear people say that, I always think of what Abraham Lincoln said in one of his addresses. In answer to some man's statement that slavery was good for some people, Lincoln responded with a sentence after which are three exclamation points in the manuscript. "Slavery is good for some people!!! As a *good* thing, slavery is strikingly peculiar in this, that it is the only good thing which no man ever seeks the good of, for *himself*." If segregation is a good thing, it is strikingly peculiar in this, that no man has ever sought it for himself.

Or you say, trying to be very reasonable and understanding, But it will never work. And I say, In nothing that I know of will we ever achieve perfection, nothing that amounts to anything. But this fact, as I understand the Christian religion, in no way excuses us from the obligation to strive in that direction.

I have three words of counsel as a conclusion, and the first is: Ponder the principle now, think about it, try to see it clearly, when there is no confusion, when the issue

is not sharply raised in your own life. Think about the principle now, get your own mind settled as to what it is; see it, accept it, understand it. Canon Streeter once wrote: "I define a principle as that which I accept in cold blood to stand by when the blood is hot." You will be much better able to deal with acute situations if you have thought about the principle in cold blood, so that when your blood is hot, you have the principle to stand by.

The second word is this. Apply it partially, even when you cannot apply it completely. Let no lesser one than Abraham Lincoln be your guide. He did not apply it completely; all at once, but here and there, where and when he could, as the times allowed, he applied it.

And when you cannot apply it completely—and you will not always be able to apply it completely, perfectly—when you cannot apply it completely, *be honest about it.* Don't try to hide behind the Bible, behind some obscure line or verse that seems to sanction your behavior. Be honest and say, "Lord, I have gone a few steps, help me to go a few more; I have done what I could, pardon the imperfection of my service."

And never forget that people who are struggling for freedom are seldom patient, although their leaders sometimes have cultivated a patience that is beyond my understanding. But the burden of patience lies not upon them but upon us who now walk freely along our way, with the liberty to think and do as we please.

Guide us, O God, in the right way as we think about these great things, and help us to see in Jesus the clue to our behavior in the future. May we always be honest with ourselves, and in so far as it is humanly possible, apply to all men everywhere the principle that they are human, like ourselves. Amen.

War and Peace

It was reported recently in one of the newspapers that vandals had smashed 3,350 windows in the cars of the New Haven Railroad during the last calendar year, costing the railroad a hundred and forty thousand of its precious dollars to replace them. Apparently, there was no provocation at all for the destruction of the windows. The people who broke them were not disinherited commuters or even disgruntled patrons, like some of us. They were simply people who had the urge to be violent, to smash something. If people are capable of such violence when there is no provocation at all, you can imagine what they are capable of when there is provocation. In fact, you do not have to imagine it; you know it all too well.

Someone insults a friend of yours, says something grossly unfair about him in public and, as you listen to the insult, you can feel your blood begin to boil, and you have the urge to strike someone. Or you may be deprived of your rights of one kind or another and, as you see them taken away from you unfairly, you begin to take steps to get them back, and by force, if necessary. A man threatens the life of your child. You do not hesitate to threaten his and even, if necessary, to take it. A clever person maneuvers you out of your position in business or, even more tragically, in marriage. You begin at once to devise ways and means for putting him out of the way, not by destroying his life, perhaps, but by destroying his reputation, shred

by shred. Krushchev makes an unfair or false statement about the United States, and you can almost see every hair on the head of every American begin to bristle.

What I am saying is that the impulse to smash things—windows, buildings, reputations, people, nations—lies very deep in us all, even the tamest and the mildest of us. You might almost say that violence is a part of our nature. A boy who doesn't fight back when he is hit isn't a real boy; and a man who hasn't the gumption to give as good as he gets isn't a real man; and a nation that isn't prepared to fight isn't much of a nation. So is violence, under the proper circumstances, generally accepted not only as a natural activity of human beings, but also as a necessary one.

And yet, it is not quite so simple as that. We wish it were, but we have come to see that on all the great issues of life there is no simplicity, not on the surface at least, and even less so in ourselves, for there are complicated depths in every man, and often contradictions that we have referred to as "ambivalence."

There are times when violence violates something deep in you. You are ashamed when you let yourself go in a violent rage, especially if there is no good cause for it. But even if there was a good reason, you wish you hadn't done it. There is something degrading about it in a parent, or in a husband or wife, or in a boss, or even in a policeman or a soldier. There is something about it that makes you loathe yourself when you have been the victim of it. At your best you feel that violence is beneath your dignity as a human being.

That is one thing that complicates the picture. Another is that there are times when you feel that Life, with a capital L, is sacred—all life, no matter whose, no matter what he has done, or how useless he is, or how much in the wrong he is—because he is alive, there is something sacred about him, something about his life that you dare not touch.

You cannot make it, therefore you dare not mar it; something of the divine is in him, no matter how deeply it may be buried, nor how completely it may be obscured by his own mistakes and follies. And at times you are drawn more and more to the ones in human life who have risen above violence. They have renounced it implicitly in all their relationships. They still have the impulse to be violent, to strike and to hit and to flash back, just as you have. They still have the impulse to be violent as they may have the impulse to steal, and to lie, and to lust. They have the impulse, but along with the other impulses, they have come to the point where they recognize that they must curb the impulse to violence as they try to curb the impulse to steal, cheat, lie, and lust.

They may say, as Albert Camus, the French novelist, said, "Violence is sometimes unavoidable, but never legitimate." Or they may go further and take a more absolute position. They may renounce violence completely. They may take their stand with those three giants of our modern era: Gandhi, a Hindu; Einstein, a Jew; and Schweitzer, a Christian. These three renounced violence completely, and this means, of course, that they renounced war. Further, it means that the only one of the three now alive is pleading eloquently for the cessation of the testing and making of nuclear weapons.

You see where we are going, and to what the smashing of the train windows is leading us. It is bringing us face to face with one of the great issues of our time. The issue is this, put in words as plain as I can put it: Shall we continue to prepare for war in order to keep the peace, or not? Shall we go ahead on the assumption that if we do not accept the risk of war, we will lose everything we have? Or, shall we change our course and risk the loss of everything, rather than risk the violence of total war? Will we face the facts of modern warfare and decide that we would rather lose everything we *have* than lose everything we *are*? Has the

time come when the means of violence has become so completely devastating that it must be completely renounced? Or shall we go on playing with it (I am sure you know that I do not speak flippantly) as a child fascinated by a gun, unable to keep his hands off it, knowing full well the danger of it, nevertheless goes on playing with it? Shall we do that?

As for me, the principle is as clear as daylight. (From here on may I say, parenthetically, that there will be more first person pronouns than I like. A sermon is not meant to be one man's opinion but, on an issue like this, I cannot see how it can be otherwise.) The broad general principle is this. Life is the gift of God and no man has the right to destroy it, either in himself or in another person.

I find it in the Old Testament: *Thou shalt not kill.* It is extraordinary to realize how even in those early days men had a glimmering of this great principle, even when they had no real comprehension of the implications of it; they went on through those Old Testament years killing right and left, when they thought it was right to do it. Nevertheless, even then they had a glimpse, an insight into this great principle, *Thou shalt not kill.*

I find it implied on every page of the New Testament. First, in what Jesus said. When he talked about enemies, he did not talk about fighting them or getting back at them; he talked about loving them. It may be impossible for you and me to do it, or even to take in the idea of it, but that is the way he talked about enemies. But most of all in what Jesus did do we see the principle incarnate in a person. He met the opposition he had to face with no sword, and when he was reviled, he reviled not again. He rose above violence, the way he rose above cruelty and darkness and loneliness and death. And I cannot but feel that he is calling us out of violence to higher ways more worthy of us as human beings.

Also, I see the principle written on every page of every

newspaper for, as I read the news, it seems to me clearer than ever, and especially when I read it in the light of what history I know, that violence always degrades people, violence always breeds violence, and begets nothing but tragedy and unhappiness. It never settles anything; it only leaves a sore that will in time spread to other parts of the body.

The principle, of course, I realize is not clear to everyone, and perhaps I should expound it at greater length, but I shall not do so. It is as clear as crystal to me, and I know that it is to some of you, if not all.

It is when I begin to apply the principle that I run into difficulties, and so do you. I know, for instance, that there are some individuals in our society who must be restrained by force, if necessary, and I cannot see a future time when that will not be the case. People being what they are, I fear that policemen and prisons are here to stay.

I can also see why the majority of people in this country sincerely believe that the same thing holds true for nations. I can see why many of our people think that the time may come when the head of a nation and the people he represents may have to be restrained by force, just as a criminal has to be restrained by force. I can see why, when one nation under an insane ruler exterminates six million Jews, the rest of the world cannot sit by and let him do it.

I can see why so many Americans are so frightened of the Russians. And I can also see, what I am afraid many Americans cannot see, why the Russians are often so frightened of us! I can feel the gravity of the responsibility placed upon our elected leaders, and I hesitate to make quick decisions or judgments when I disagree with them, realizing that were I in their place, I would probably not be able to do as well. The pressures exerted upon them are enormous, the issues are tremendous, and the responsibility in their hands is greater than the spectators are often likely to grasp.

Nor am I personally prepared to say that in every conceivable situation that might arise, war would be the wrong thing to do. I am prepared to say that in my judgment it would be wrong because I believe war is evil and therefore always wrong, but it might not be the wrong thing to do under the particular circumstances. It might be the lesser of two evils.

On the other hand, I believe that it is not God's will for human beings to slaughter each other in global wars. I cannot see it any other way, and I believe that it is God's will for us, his creatures, to do everything we can in our power to prevent such slaughter. Once the plague strikes us, we are caught in its evil grip but, before it strikes us, we are in a position to do everything we can to prevent it.

I believe that for the first time in human history there is the possibility that the human race can renounce violence as a legitimate way of behavior, and this simply because the violence has become so perfectly instrumented that one bomb could destroy a whole city, or even a nation. The means of violence have been made so perfect that they may have defeated their own purpose. A great deal will depend upon who takes the lead. The more powerful the nation, the more its leadership will count. And the bolder its leadership, the greater the risks it will run. Nothing risked, nothing gained; nothing dared, nothing done.

I should like to see the United States take that lead. We are now in a better position than any other country on the face of the earth to take it. We have Christian foundations, strengthened by the sensitive Jewish awareness of the righteousness of God. We have the power, the material strength and, I hope hidden in the secret places of our people's hearts, the moral and spiritual strength to do it. We are not perfect, by any means, but we have no history of aggression behind us, no thirst for power over other na-

tions within us, and a spirit of idealism that has not been singed by either the skeptics or the cynics.

But if the United States is to take the lead, that is, if *we* are to take the lead, we will have to lose some of our fear, or exchange it for another brand. We will have to fear the Russians less, and fear the dry rot in our own society more. It will be necessary for us to fear missing out in the missile race less, and fear missing out in our own character, destiny, and role in history more. It will mean that we will have to fear the threat of bombs less, and the judgment of God more.

It will mean that we will have to take a more positive stand than I fear we are taking now, a stand not merely against something, but for something. As I try to see it, even though dimly and at a distance, and allowing for mistakes and errors, it means standing for something even more than freedom. It means standing for the freedom of men who will no longer be subject to fits of world-wide violence every twenty-five years. That is something to stand for, and even if we made only a stab at it, we would lift the morale of this country higher than it has been in fifty years, and the morale of the whole world even higher.

You and I, obviously, will never be in a position to make the great decisions, and we are therefore likely to say to ourselves, "What can I do, and what difference does my thought and opinion make? All I can do is to leave it to the men in Washington, and trust to luck that we will come out well." But you know before I tell you that what you and I think, and say, and do, creates the climate of the nation, and inevitably though indirectly influences the leaders.

What do you think? Do you think it is wrong to kill a man, or not? For a good reason, or for no reason? Do you think it is wrong to wipe out a city, or not? An enemy

city, or any city? Do you think it is wrong to prepare to do, even in self-defense, the thing which violates everything that is deep in you? What do you say about these things as you talk to your friends? Do you say things that have no basis in fact, and are not supported by any information at all, but simply spring out of the depths of your emotions? Are you taken in by the black and white pictures of international affairs—all the evil on that side, and all the good on this side?

And what do you do? Do you curb or encourage the urge to be violent? Do you do everything you can to support the people who are trying to make peace, or do you mingle with the trouble-makers who deal in rumors and work behind the scenes? It makes all the difference in the world, you see, what you and I do and think and say. We can either keep the kettle boiling, or we can bring it to a calm, creative stillness.

Fact and Wonder

Only the young possess the simplicity
To accept a truth transcending rote and rule,
So that, like star-led shepherds, children see
The fact of miracle.

But logic, the sophist, clouds the maturing life,
Caution replaces the fearless face of youth,
Till the skeptic mind prefers a plausible lie
To a fantastic truth.[1]

"And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." It is a fantastic truth! Do you prefer a plausible

[1] G. S. Galbraith in *The Christian Science Monitor,* Nov. 25, 1959. Reprinted with permission.

lie to it, or have you still the freshness and the fearlessness of your youthful days, so that you can cast out caution and skepticism, and strike out for that fantastic truth?

Look upon us, O God, with understanding and patience as we try to find our way through the frightening tangle of international affairs. Clarify our vision of the truth; help us to see in Jesus him in whom violence found no place; and as we follow him, step by step, imperfectly though faithfully, may we gradually rule it out of our lives. Amen.

Life and Death

In this country we are preoccupied with our physical existence. By the development of medical knowledge and science we have prolonged it. By our civilized arts of living we have refined it, and by our scientific advancement we have made it more comfortable. Death brings that existence to an end. It is not so much that we are afraid of death as it is that, unconsciously if not consciously, we begrudge it. It is an unwelcome intruder; it interrupts and interferes with an existence that most of us, in spite of a certain amount of pain and anxiety, enjoy. We do not willingly give it up. Hence, we are inclined to think of death as the worst thing that can happen to anybody, and we do everything we can to act as though it did not exist. We cloak it with flowers; we screen it behind sentimental music; and we almost never speak about it.

I propose to speak about it not in the full splendor of New Testament faith, but against the somber background of Old Testament thought. Granted, of course, that what I say is by no means all there is to be said, nevertheless, it is the foundation on which a real faith in life after death must rest. At the moment I am concerned not so much with what comes after death as I am in the coming of death itself.

A subject so vast and so full of mystery we approach only with awe and humility. Our knowledge is limited, our sight is partial, and the area to be surveyed is enormous.

There are three facts about death that are like the piers of a bridge, and the first is this: *death is not like a disease that comes to some but not to all; death comes to everybody.* When you hear people talk about death you often sense that they are talking about it as they might talk about a terrible disease, as though leprosy struck some unfortunate person who might ordinarily have been expected to avoid it. Death is not like that; death is not like a tragedy that sweeps down upon one family and leaves another one free and happy. It is like birth; it happens to everyone. It has no favorites.

The man who wrote the ninetieth psalm took a rather grim view of life, to be sure, but at least he was realistic about death. You remember those vivid and solemn phrases he used. He wrote, We are like grass. In the morning, with the dew on it, it is fresh and green and alive, but during the day the reaper comes and mows it; and when you see it in the evening it is faded and withered, dead. We are like that, all of us. Here one day and gone the next. He even went so far as to describe our life as something that comes to an end like a sigh. He made it very clear that there were no exceptions and no exemptions; we are all like grass. The life of every single one of us comes to an end like a story that is told, that is over, that is finished.

That fact leads us to the solemn observation that death is a normal part of man's natural experience. In itself it is not evil; it may, to be sure, often be attended by evil circumstances, like the death that comes about by the bombing of innocent citizens in an enemy city, or the painful death of starvation which thousands of people in India are suffering at this very moment. But death itself is not evil, any more than birth is evil. Birth may also be attended by evil circumstances, and much pain, and yet birth as an event in the life history of an individual is not evil but good. In itself death is not tragic; it may, to be sure, be accompanied by tragic circumstances when it comes

prematurely to one too young to die. We then feel the overwhelming tragedy of it, but it is not the death that is tragic; it is the circumstances of it. Nor in itself is it sad when you think of it as a universal experience. Some of you know all too well that it is often attended by a sadness too deep for words when people who have loved each other for many years are separated. But the fact of death in itself is not sad.

The sooner we can make death a normal part of our picture of life, the sooner we shall be able to speak of it in the way that D. H. Lawrence spoke of it when he began a poem called, "The Ship of Death." In this free and exuberant, not resisting, not reluctant, not resentful way, he said,

> I sing of autumn and the falling fruit
> And the long journey towards oblivion.
> The apples falling like great drops of dew
> To bruise themselves an exit from themselves.
> Have you built your ship of death, O have you?
> Build then your ship of death, for you will need it.[1]

Indeed you will. We will all need it, for the time will come when we shall die. It seems to me healthy and right that once a year, at least, we should face the fact as quietly and as honestly as we can, and in the presence of God accept it.

The second fact about death is this: *death puts an end to our physical existence,* this existence which we have to varying degrees enjoyed. The psalmist, I am afraid, did not enjoy his very much, because he lived in hard times and he talked about life as a span of toil and trouble, and even though people lived to be seventy or eighty years old, their trouble increased the longer they lived. But most of us, if we had the choice between our physical existence and

[1] Reprinted with permission of the Viking Press.

the cessation of it, would choose to go on with it. Death when it comes is the end of it.

In other words, to put it into journalistic language, we all have a deadline to meet. We do not have all the time in the world. The time is short at best. Some people have more than others, but no one has very much. When you think of the span of the longest life you know it is not very many years. The psalmist's response to that fact, to the fact that death puts an actual end to our physical existence, was a prayer which we might well add to our treasury of prayers—"O teach us so to count our days that we may take it to heart," or in the Prayer Book version, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The fact that life is so short makes it seem to some people futile. Perhaps you know people like that. When they are faced with the fact that they haven't much time, and that in that time they may not be able to accomplish very much, they let down all the tension and think that the best thing they can do while they are here is to make the most of it and have as good a time as they can. That is one response to the brevity of life, certainly not a very noble one.

Most people, I think, when they really confront the fact of the brevity of their lives and the fact that the time is short, are more likely to take the psalmist's way and to be convinced of the seriousness of life. *The shorter life is, the more serious it is.* One of the most colorful personalities in this city thirty years ago was Dr. Hans Zinsser. He wrote several widely-read books so that many of us who did not know him personally knew him through his books. In the last one he tells how on his last return from a trip abroad he realized before he left the ship that he had a disease that was incurable. He diagnosed it himself but in order to be sure he went to one of his friends, a Boston doctor, who confirmed the diagnosis. He describes himself and his doc-

tor friend standing in the doctor's office looking out the window onto the Charles River Basin. He said they stood there in silence for a few minutes and in those few minutes something happened to him. "Everything," he writes about himself, "that went on about him or within him from that moment on struck upon his heart and mind with a new and powerful resonance." Because he knew that he didn't have much time, life became more intense. All the experiences that he enjoyed in the past he enjoyed more. He went back and reread all the books that he loved and delighted in them more than he had the first time he read them. Everything that shone at all for him shone with a new splendor because the time was short. He didn't have all the time in the world to waste, to fritter away. He had only a few weeks, perhaps only a few days. Every day was precious, every moment was something to be counted and treasured, and he said life began to glow with an intensity that he had never before known in all his life.

We probably shall never have that experience; it probably would be better for most of us if we did not. But in a similar way we all know, though not quite so dramatically, that the time is short. We haven't all the time in the world and one of the things that we who are likely to be rather casual about life and carefree in the spending of our time ought to realize quite solemnly is that we have only one chance. We shall never have another. We may have other opportunities on the other side of death; we know nothing about those and it is better not to speculate about them. We know what the conditions of physical existence are and we know that the time will come when that will end, and we shall never have another chance like the one we have now. The music that we don't hear in these years of our existence, we will never hear. The love that we hoard up in ourselves and never spend on people, we will never give and never spend. The things that we don't enjoy in life, the beauty in the world and all the things that

make life wonderful, we will never enjoy. The people we don't understand now, the reconciliations that we don't make now, we will never have another chance to make. The work that we don't do now, the work that we let slip and slide because it is difficult, because we are not ready, because we want to do other things, we will never have another chance to do. The character that we don't make now, the sacrifices that we are not willing to make, the discipline that we are not prepared to undertake, we will never have another chance to make. It is now or never, and that fact ought to be brought out where we can see it at regular intervals. We don't want to go through life abnormally tense and anxious, but neither do we want to go through life listless and limp and carefree, when the time is short and the chance we have now is the only chance we will ever have to live here.

So our prayer is the same prayer that the psalmist prayed, "O God, teach us to count our days," and we might add, "We know that we have only one chance. O God, help us not to miss it."

One more thing we should consider before we leave this theme. This is the third and far more subtle fact about death, far more difficult to put into words. *There are things that do not die.* There are things in our ordinary experience right around us that outlast us. Beethoven died in 1827, but the concerto that he wrote when he was a young man will outlast him for how many years to come? When we hear it played it seems to us that it has entered into the land of endless time and eternity and will outlast him forever.

It is something like an old house. You live in it; you are perfectly aware of the fact that other families have lived in it. They have come and gone. It has outlived them all. It will outlive you. But in the very fact of its durability you feel it embracing you; it gives you a kind of security and safety that makes you strong and confident to go

through life and to face its brevity and its transiency with good spirit. Like a child, you have a place to come home to, and you are safe. When you think of things like that, they lead you on to greater things which outlast and outlive you.

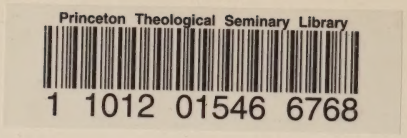
The psalmist felt that way about God. He was conscious of a tremendous distance between himself and God. There was the distance of time. His life was so brief; God's life had no beginning and no ending. God did not die, and he did. Men come and go; God goes on forever. There was also the distance of quality. God was not evil, and he was. It made him tremble when he thought about it. Yet in that very distance the psalmist found his dwelling-place. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." It was as though the God who was here to make the hills and the sea and the dry land before any men appeared and who will be here long after their going, was, in a way, like the family home, embracing, surrounding, protecting, giving a kind of security and a safety that people otherwise would not have. The psalmist had a short life and not an altogether sweet one, but he had a place to come home to.

In our time I think it is true that we are rediscovering the distance of God. In the Middle Ages the typical religious experience of men was of God's nearness, but as the very penetrating remark of Wystan Auden, the poet, reminds us, "In our time the typical experience is of the distance of God"—the vastness, the farness of God. In that there is the danger of despair and unbelief. But Auden goes on to conclude, "But for our time the distance of God may be something he wishes us to learn."

What I wish to put into your minds, that it may stay there through the years, is this: whereas a near, friendly God may give you comfort and help when you need it, the God of the cosmos and the universe who is not like you, brief in time and years; not like you, subject to sin and

evil and mistake, but everlastingly good and eternal, gives you a home, and the security that only a home can give. The very fact that he is so far from you means that he is able to surround you and your life, and that you—your birth, your life, your death—are cradled, as it were, in the reality of God whom no man can completely understand or comprehend, but in whom he can put his trust. It is the majesty of God that is our final defense against the fear of death, for in spite of the fact that death comes to all of us, that life is so short, and because it is so short is therefore so serious, nevertheless it is safe because God is so great. He is our dwelling place from generation to generation, and we have no fear either in life or in death.

O God, as we face the solemn wonder and mystery of death, which sooner or later comes to all of us, open our eyes to see it as part of the normal experience of life. Our departure is in thy hands, even as our birth was. Take away our fear of it; help us to welcome it when it comes, knowing that in it and behind it is thy goodness and thy greatness, and that no matter what happens we rest in thy care. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.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